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# PRABUDDHA BHARATA

or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896



May 2012

Vol. 117, No. 5

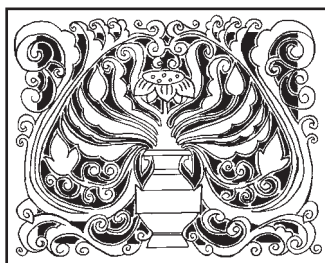


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Vol. 117, No. 5  
May 2012



Amrita Kalasha

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# TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*



## God's Nature

May 2012  
Vol. 117, No. 5

इन्द्रियेभ्यः परा ह्यर्था अर्थेभ्यश्च परं मनः ।  
मनसस्तु परा बुद्धिर्बुद्धेरात्मा महान्परः ॥  
महतः परमव्यक्तमव्यक्तात्पुरुषः परः ।  
पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित्सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः ॥

The sense objects are higher than the senses, and the mind is higher than the sense objects; but the intellect is higher than the mind, and the Great Soul [Mahat] is higher than the intellect. The Unmanifested is higher than Mahat; the Purusha is higher than the Unmanifested. There is nothing higher than the Purusha. He is the culmination. He is the highest goal.

(*Katha Upanishad*, 1.3.10–11)

मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनं च महेश्वरम् ।  
तस्यावयवभूतैस्तु व्याप्तं सर्वमिदं जगत् ॥

One should know that nature is surely maya, and the supreme Lord is the ruler of maya. This whole universe is verily pervaded by what are his parts.

(*Shvetashvatara Upanishad*, 4.10)

कुतस्तु खलु सोम्यैव स्यादिति होवाच कथमसतः सञ्जायेतेति ।  
सत्त्वेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीदेकमेवाद्वितीयम् ॥

He [Aruni] said [to his son Shvetaketu]: 'O good looking one, by what logic can existence verily come out of non-existence? But surely, O good looking one, in the beginning all this was Existence, One only without a second.'

(*Chhandogya Upanishad*, 6.2.2)



# THIS MONTH

**Human Ability and Responsibility** explains how the world emerges from the universal mind and what humankind has to comprehend and finally transcend for attaining liberation.

One of the biggest threats humans face today comes from the environment we ravage. Dr Vinita Mohan, Assistant Professor, H H M S P B N S S College for Women, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, writes on **Environmental Ethics: An Indian Perspective**.



Swami Vivekananda's concept of education is a panacea for reducing individual and social ills. Mohit Puri, Senior Research Fellow, and Dr Pardeep Kumar, Head, Department of Philosophy, both of Punjabi University, Patiala, present the **Educational**

**Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda**.

Ananya Jana, studying for her MTech at the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati, raises pertinent questions regarding social influences that rob children of their innocence in **Will 'Snow White' Die?**



Feminism is philosophically countering prejudices against women by delineating women's subjectivity. Dr Merina Islam, Assistant Professor, Department of Philosophy, Cachar College, Silchar, gives its salient features in **Women's Moral Subjectivity**.

Concluding **Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – V**, Swami Bhajanananda, Assistant Secretary, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, sums up major changes that occurred with Sri Ramakrishna's advent and their significance for humanity.



Dr Pramila Davidson, former professor at McGill and Pune Universities, dilates on Schopenhauer's 'will' and Descartes's *cogito ergo sum* and presents more comprehensive lines of thought found in Vedanta and Swamiji's teachings in her concluding part of **Aspects of Western Philosophy and Swami Vivekananda**.

In the sixth part of **Vivekananda and His Seafaring Vessels** Somenath Mukherjee, Researcher, Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Kolkata, describes Swamiji's second voyage to the West in the *SS Golconda*.



The third instalment of **Svarajya Siddhi: Attaining Self-dominion** by Gangadharendra Saraswati, fifteenth pontiff of Kanchi Kamakoti Pitham, Kanchipuram, logically discusses an aspect of Vedanta: *ajnana*, ignorance. The original text is translated and annotated by Swami Narasimhananda of Advaita Ashrama, Kolkata.

# *Human Ability and Responsibility*

ONLY TILL RECENTLY many people held the fallacious belief that humans and not animals, reptiles, birds and others forms of life, were endowed with mind. Such false beliefs running unchecked caused humankind to irreparably destroy many life forms as well as irrationally exploit the environment. Humans now find that their actions are actually destroying themselves, directly and indirectly. Science came as a saviour by showing that *Homo sapiens* and lowly chimpanzees are almost genetically identical and that all life in its myriad forms has arisen from the same seed. If human bodies and minds have risen from chromosomes, every organism with chromosomes will manifest a mind, and the boasted claim for exclusivity is wrong.

The Indian belief that wherever life exists mind must also manifest, in however basic form, is today being vindicated. Moreover, another erroneous belief that mind needs brain to manifest or that brain is equal to mind has been shattered. Humankind is no doubt special, but not in the old crude sense. Swami Vivekananda says: 'Although the Chitta [mind-stuff] is in every animal, from the lowest to the highest, it is only in the human form that we find it as the intellect. ... Immediate salvation is impossible for the cow or the dog, although they have mind, because their Chitta cannot as yet take that form which we call intellect.' Modern human knowledge coupled with ancient wisdom is changing the way humanity looks at itself and the world around, and the feeling of being exalted and eminent in creation is marked

by humility and a sense of oneness. This perception has also given humanity a sense of belongingness, responsibility, and purpose, resulting in efforts to protect, nurture, and enhance life forms and the environment.

Nature, internal and external, is a continuum. Through billions of years the basic building codes of life, the DNA, has produced the astounding variety of life. But the DNA and all that is in the cell has risen from nature's materials! This great growth and movement of universal life called evolution, through complex molecular structures, has modified, adapted, and recreated nature; but mostly modified, adapted, and recreated itself by building better organized physical systems that can work on nature. The entire evolutionary process goes through tremendous struggles showing awesome intelligence. Even microscopic life modifies the world, and in turn the world modifies life. For instance, oxygen, so vital to most life forms, is produced and pumped into the atmosphere by innumerable algae.

In a laboratory one can study the amazing life of cells, how they divide and proliferate in a nutrient rich liquid. The same processes are repeated all over nature. On the macro scale, another crucial factor called nurture exerts its influence through living organisms. Nurture is important to all life forms in order to compete, survive, and propagate in a harsh world. But in humans, endowed with the urge to learn, nurture has taken a higher place than mere survival and propagation. Learning and education have been made the basic building blocks of society.




Education organizes information according to logical structures and relationships that are acquired by systematic exposure, teaching, and study. In this process all information becomes knowledge and results in expertise, more analytic skills, and insights. Wisdom constitutes the final maturing of these processes. Learning is a life-long nurturing process, as Sri Ramakrishna says: 'As long as I live so long do I learn.' This ability to nurture the desire to learn and use learning for better nurture has opened immense possibilities. Today, the secrets of life are unravelling, and humankind can even tinker with genes to produce variations in plants and animals as well as create beneficial medicines and materials.

One of the remarkable things in the universe is the creation of a subjective world of tastes, desires, fears, ambitions, love, and knowledge, which emphasizes primacy of the individual. Individuality is found everywhere in all species that are composed of universal materials such as genes, mind, nurture, and environment. In humans the additional factors of race, sex, culture, religion, language, wealth, education, and profession are also crucial. Society provides an unlimited amount of information, a small part of which is used to generate additional information and is projected out. In this vortex of information an inner world is forged through dynamic universal materials and social factors. Generally, people mistake their subjectivity as absolute and consequently suffer, because in this whirlpool of information the inner world is constantly remodelled.

The DNA is a molecular structure encoded with information. Modern science speaks of even atoms, sub-atoms, and energy as having information. Matter or energy cannot be created or destroyed, and that makes information indestructible too. Information may be ordered in some places, like a computer, that can be

deciphered and retrieved, and in other places information is scrambled as in an atomic blast. But what is scrambled can be unscrambled in time, and what is ordered can become disordered and scrambled. This process is continuous. Whatever is consciously or subconsciously experienced is information. It permeates everything: the gross, subtle, inner, and outer worlds. Mind, so long held as unique and mysterious, is made of matter, not spirit, according to Indian philosophy and science.

If we reverse the common sense view of this profound truth and look at it metaphysically, we will discover that information has created all energy, matter, DNA—all sentient and insentient things. Some religious people would be happy to conclude that creation has issued from the mind of God. However, the ancient Sankhya philosophers, thousands of years before Charles Darwin and today's scientists, taught that the first evolute of Prakriti, nature, is *mahat*, universal mind; from *mahat* evolves *asmita*, universal 'I' consciousness. Next, from *asmita* evolves all matter, sense organs, mind, and matter in all forms—in short, the universe. The universal mind is the root of the universe, not the genetic seed, and one finds distinct individuality even in individual cells and the lowest forms of life. Unlike the scientific belief of creation coming out of randomness and chance, the ancient philosophers taught that evolution is a well-ordered system, because the Purusha, Self, is behind the process, lending consciousness to it. The work of Prakriti, or the purpose of evolution, is for the *bhoga*, experience, and *apavarga*, liberation, of the Purusha.

By evolving the *chitta* to take the form of intelligence, Prakriti has conferred on humankind a special ability along with the responsibility to properly understand the universal mind spread out as the universe and become free. 

# Environmental Ethics: An Indian Perspective

Prof. Vinitha Mohan

INDIAN RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS are intertwined with equally disparate cultural, social, linguistic, philosophical, and ethical systems that have developed over a vast period. The movements of peoples, foreign interventions, and internal transformations in structures and identities have added to this diversity. There are records from incomplete archaeological findings that prove the existence of a major civilization, the Indus Valley, in a sprawling region encompassed by Punjab, the north-western parts of India, and Sind and Baluchistan in present-day Pakistan. This civilization peaked around 3000 BCE, at a time when a close symbiosis between nature and people appears to have been prevalent.<sup>1</sup> The major cities of the Indus Valley civilization, Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro—with their imposing brick-built civic and residential edifices, streets, and other structures, complete with baths and extensive drainage and sewer

systems—give the impression of being carefully designed. Their architecture as well as farming practices evince a structural harmony with the surroundings and the climatic conditions, which would optimally conserve natural resources, prevent deforestation, and also appease the gods, who were seen as more than personified symbols of nature.

Most elements of the religious and cultural practices from the Indus Valley period and other indigenous communities continued into subsequent phases of Indian history. India's agrarian culture, so much dependent on the forces of nature, is reflected in the repertory of hymns, the earliest of which are known as the Rig Veda. The oral tradition and the Vedas are among the oldest records of India's ruminations on the Divine and exaltedly intoned the intimacy between the human being and nature: 'We claim protection from the Hills, we claim protection of the Floods, of him who stands by Vishnu's side.'<sup>2</sup>

## Spirit of the Forest

By about 500 BCE the Vedas gave way to the Upanishads, which are the philosophical treatises that elevated metaphysical knowledge over the sacrificial rituals of the earlier sections. The Upanishads—also known as forest, *aranyakas*, treatises—are full of reverence for the natural world. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* the great sage Yajnavalkya, after defeating the other Vedic scholars, puts a counter question to them:





‘As a large tree, so indeed is a man. (This is) true. His hair is its leaves, his skin its outer bark. It is from his skin that blood flows, and from the bark sap. Therefore when a man is wounded, blood flows as sap from a tree that is injured. His flesh is its inner bark, and his tendons its innermost layer of bark; both are tough. His bones lie under, as does its wood; his marrow is comparable to its pith.’<sup>3</sup>

A sacred verse of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* says: ‘O Vayu [wind god]. You indeed are the immediate Brahman. You alone I shall call the direct Brahman.’<sup>4</sup> Every human announces his or her arrival to this world with a cry. The breath we breathe every second depends on the composition of air available around our nostrils and mouth at that point of time. Other than green vegetation, there is nothing more efficient in mopping up carbon dioxide and in oxygenating the air constantly and instantly. Forests have always been central to Indian civilization, and the Upanishads and the Bhagavadgita at times use the illustration of a tree or a forest to describe the world. The rural community has also been viewed as a model for the evolution of society and civilization. It was incumbent upon the higher castes to undertake the third stage of life known as Vanaprastha Ashrama, where both husband and wife would practise tapasya in a nearby forest. Aranyani, the goddess of the forest, has been worshipped as the primary source of life and fertility. The Rig Veda praises Aranyani and the forest in one of its hymns:

Goddess of wild and forest who seemest to vanish from the sight. How is it that thou seekest not the village? Are thou not afraid? What time the grasshopper replies and swells the shrill cicada’s voice, seeming to sound with tinkling bells, the Lady of the Wood exults. And, yonder, cattle seem to graze, what seems a dwelling-place appears; or else at eve the Lady of

the Forest seems to free the wains. Here one is calling to his cow, another there hath felled a tree; at eve the dweller in the wood fancies that somebody hath screamed. The Goddess never slays, unless some murderous enemy approach. Man eats of savoury fruit and then takes, even as he wills, his rest. Now have I praised the Forest Queen, sweet-scented, redolent of balm, The Mother of all sylvan things, who tills not but hath stores of food.’<sup>5</sup>

The *Arthashastra*, sections of which were written in the fourth to third century BCE, gives an account of life in a well-ordered state. It was composed by Kautilya, an advisor of the Mauryan King Chandragupta, and reflects, among other things, the advanced scientific and technical knowledge of the time. It includes detailed instructions about the maintenance of forests. ‘The boundaries of a village shall be denoted by a river, a mountain, forests, bulbous plants, caves ... or by trees such as *śalmali*, *śamī* and *kṣīravṛkṣa*.’<sup>6</sup> The first and third of these trees may be what is now known as silk-cotton and milk trees; the second is acacia suma. The *Arthashastra* also inveighs against those who pollute public places, temples, ponds, and rivers and prescribes corresponding punishment. Not only did the state control cultivated land through peasant intermediaries, but it began annexing hunting lands that had been the traditional preserve of food-gathering tribals. The Mauryas conserved resources by promoting the protection of rare plants and animals, sacred groves, ponds, and rivers.

The basis of Swami Vivekananda’s thought is the Upanishads. At the innermost level of being, all existence is one. Swamiji says:

Thinkers in ancient India gradually came to understand that the idea of separateness was erroneous, that there was a connection among all those distinct objects—there was a unity



which pervaded the whole universe—trees, shrubs, animals, men, Devas, even God Himself; the Advaitin reaching the climax in this line of thought declared all to be but the manifestations of the One. In reality, the metaphysical and the physical universe are one, and the name of this One is Brahman.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, according to Swamiji, science is the study of the variations that have been manifested by Brahman; and since Brahman is ultimately one, all branches of science and true knowledge must ultimately converge. Swamiji's belief in social action is evident in the following words: 'Why should I love every one? Because they and I are one. ... There is this oneness, this solidarity of the whole universe. From the lowest worm that crawls under our feet to the highest beings that ever lived—all have various bodies, but one Soul' (2.413–14). His affirmation of the 'solidarity of the whole universe' can be seen as the basis of an essential environmental ethics. This insight was effectively taken up by Jagadish-chandra Bose in his research into the possibility of pain in plants. He says:

When I came upon the mute witness of these self-made records and perceived in them one phase of a pervading unity that bears within it all things: the mote that quivers in ripples of light, the teeming life upon our earth, and the radiant suns that shine above us—it was then I understood for the first time a little of that message proclaimed by my ancestors on the banks of the Ganges thirty centuries ago—'They who see but one in all the changing manifestations of this universe, unto them belongs Eternal Truth—unto none else!'<sup>8</sup>

According to Rabindranath Tagore, the distinctiveness of Indian civilization consists in its having defined life in the forest as the highest form of cultural evolution:

Not being caged in brick, wood and iron, Indian thinkers were surrounded by and linked to the life of the forest. The living forest was for them their shelter, their source of food. The intimate relationship between human life and living nature became the source of knowledge. Nature was not dead and inert in this knowledge system. The experience of life in the forest made it adequately clear that living nature was the source of light and air, of food and water.<sup>9</sup>

### **Humanity and Nature**

Due prominence was given at the 1992 Earth Summit to Mahatma Gandhi's view that 'the earth has enough for everyone's need but not for anyone's greed'. His ideas are often cited as the inspiration behind modern environmental movements. Gandhi challenges the Western anthropocentric view that the human being enjoys absolute ontological superiority to the rest of nature and the right of unrestrained domination over the non-human world. He affirms a cosmocentric anthropology based on a mutually enriching relationship between humanity and nature.

All the religions and cultures of the South Asian regions have been rooted in forests, not through fear and ignorance but through ecological insights. Norman Myers says: 'In contrast to the folklore of temperate zones, which often regards forests as dark places of danger, traditional perceptions of forests in the humid tropics convey a sense of intimate harmony, with people and forests equal occupants of a communal habitat, a primary source of congruity between man and nature.'<sup>10</sup>

Accounts of Buddha's life are richly embellished with allusions to nature. An early text mentions Buddha saying: 'Know ye the grasses and the trees. ... know ye the worms, and the moths, and the different sorts of ants. ... Know

ye also the four-footed animals small and great, the serpents, the fish ... the birds. ... Know ye the marks that constitute species and theirs, and their species are manifold.<sup>11</sup> The Mauryan Emperor Ashoka, following his conversion to Buddhism, carried out large-scale plant and forestry improvements, which are mentioned in his pillar edicts. One of these edicts reads as follows: 'The king ... enjoins that: medical attendance should be made available to both man and animal; the medicinal herbs, the fruit trees, the roots and tubers, are to be transplanted in those places where they are not presently available, ... wells should be dug and shadowy trees should be planted by the roadside for enjoyment both by man and animal.'<sup>12</sup>

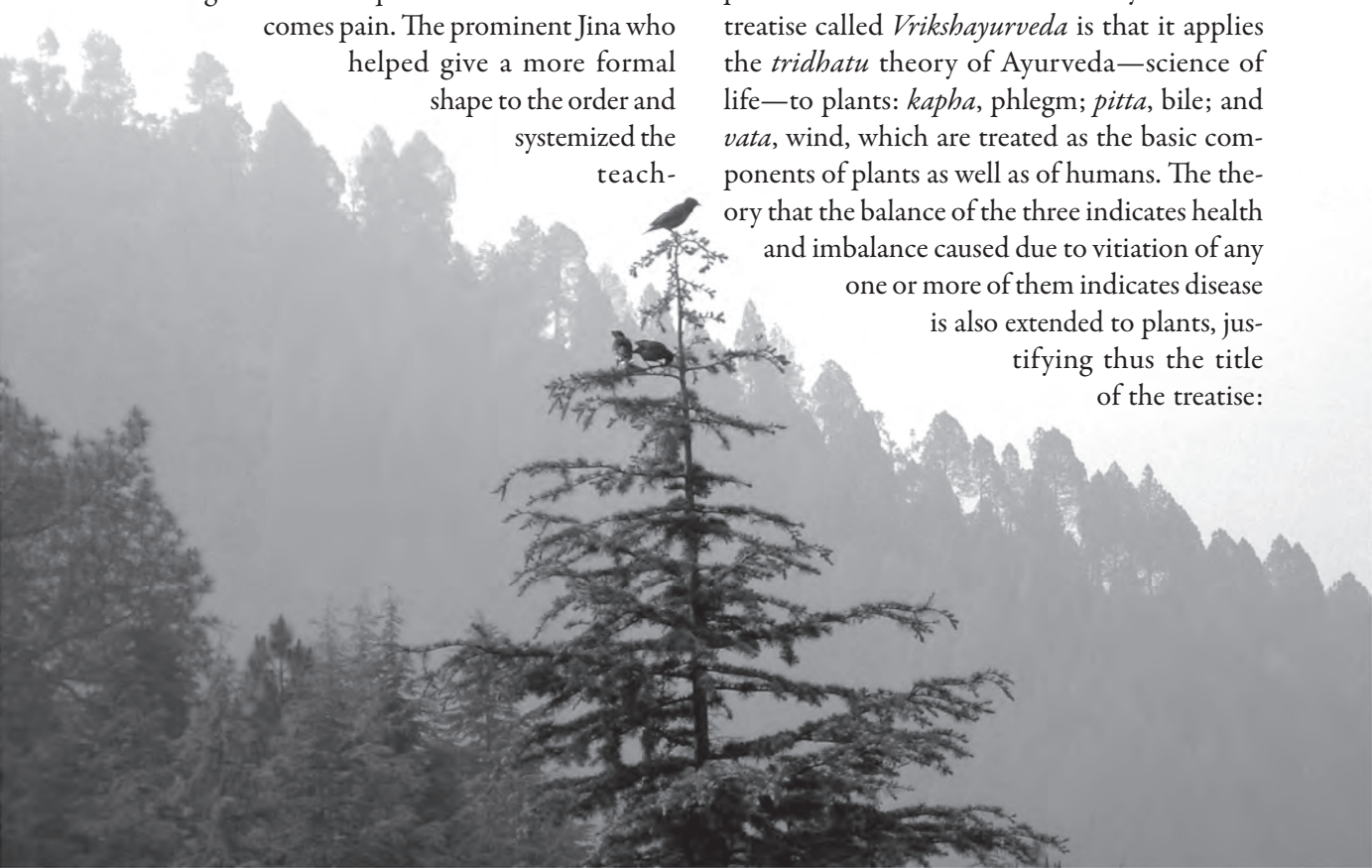
Another of Ashoka's pillar edicts effectively marks the end of the method of land clearing: 'Forests must not be burnt either uselessly or in order to destroy (living beings).'<sup>13</sup>

Jainism owes its name to the term *jina*, meaning one who conquers attachment and overcomes pain. The prominent Jina who helped give a more formal shape to the order and systemized the teach-

ings of an older group of Jinas was Mahavira, a contemporary of Buddha. The basic philosophic belief of the Jains is that every entity in the world possesses a *jiva*, sentient principle, and there are a countless number of *jivas*, whose distinguishing feature is consciousness along with vital energy and a pleasurable disposition. The suggestion is that consciousness is continuous and nothing in the universe is without some degree of sentience, from its more developed form in adult human beings to invisible embryonic modes at lower animal and plant levels.

Indians have traditionally recognized the dependence of human survival on the existence of forests. They had a systematic knowledge about plants and forest ecosystems and therefore formulated informal principles of forest management. In ancient Indian traditions scientific knowledge of the plant kingdom is evident from terms such as *vrikshayurveda*, which means science of the treatment of plant diseases, and *vanaspathavidya*, plant sciences. The most noteworthy fact in the treatise called *Vrikshayurveda* is that it applies the *tridhatu* theory of Ayurveda—science of life—to plants: *kapha*, phlegm; *pitta*, bile; and *vata*, wind, which are treated as the basic components of plants as well as of humans. The theory that the balance of the three indicates health and imbalance caused due to vitiation of any

one or more of them indicates disease is also extended to plants, justifying thus the title of the treatise:



*Vrikshayurveda*. Even the materials for the prescribed treatments were in many cases similar to those for humans. Forestry science did not perceive trees just as wood; they were looked upon from a multifunctional point of view, with a focus on diversity of form and function.

In ancient India forests and groves were identified as sacred and so properly maintained—probably a cultural response towards their divine protectors. As G B Pant reports regarding conservation in the Himalayas: ‘A natural system of conservancy was in vogue; almost every hill-top is dedicated to some local deity and trees on or about the spot are regarded with great respect so that nobody dare touch them. There is also a general impression among the people that everyone cutting a tree should plant another in its place.’<sup>14</sup>

Sacred groves are multifaceted social institutions and symbolize the dynamic social forces linked to the access and control over natural resources. They possess a great heritage of a diverse gene pool of many forest species that have medicinal values as well as socio-religious implications. Sacred groves are ecologically very important. They are the abodes of rare, endemic, and endangered species of flora and fauna. The socially worshipped multipurpose oak (genus *Quercus*) is used as fodder and as fuel; it is also considered to serve a variety of functions and is an important component of the mountain forest ecosystem. The value of sacred groves is immense, as they are a good source of a variety of non-wood products like fatty oils, spices, medicinal plants, and others. The faunal wealth of sacred groves is also diverse and worth preserving. Besides these, their role in water conservation and their effect on the microclimate of the region are also significant.

Trees have a prominent place near the Hindu temples of India. Many temples do have huge

trees planted in their vicinity and some even have *sthalavrikshams*, sacred trees, as deities. The atmosphere around peepul trees is reported to have abundant oxygen; therefore, resting under these kind of trees rejuvenates the mind and the body. In the ancient Harappan civilization too peepul trees were considered sacred. Certain trees were considered sacred probably due to the positive environmental impact they had or to the awe and wonder of an ancient people towards nature.

### Environmental Awareness

Traditional Hindu, Jaina, and Buddhist environmental values and concerns have continued to influence the discourse and allied practices of environmentalism in much of South Asia. A spectacular environmental movement called Chipko—from an Indian vernacular meaning ‘cling on to’, which describes embracing the trees to prevent environmental destruction through human intervention—was directly influenced by Gandhian environmental awareness programmes and led by Gandhian *sarvodaya*, welfare-for-all, workers on the principle of non-violent resistance.<sup>15</sup>

The Narmada Dam project in south Gujarat, which used similar nonviolent resistance tactics to raise awareness of environmental concerns, is another case that drew worldwide attention. Environmentalists have constantly argued that damming the river would cause immense damage to the surrounding landscape, which would also lead to the dislocation of masses of tribal people who have lived in the vicinity with good regard for their environment for countless generations. Their intense protests provoked the World Bank to temporarily withdraw its share of the promised funding.

While traditions in many countries explicitly followed ecological principles for centuries,



possibly the first time governments recognized such principles at an international level was at the United Nations conference on human environment in Stockholm in 1972. It stated the common conviction that 'Humans have the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations.' The world has changed and the challenges of industrialization, modernity, globalization, and a rapidly expanding liberal economy present a very different set of circumstances and contexts that require quite different sorts of responses on the environmental front.

Are there any resources left within the traditional framework to combat the modern consumer model, which has all but disrupted the traditional agricultural practices and all kinds of unities? asks one of the best-known Indian women activists and environmentalists. But Shiva [Vandana] for one does not underestimate the contribution traditional or pre-modern sensibilities can make towards fostering a 'post-modern' response in the terms of an integrated, holistic view of both humans and their environment.<sup>16</sup>

The suggestion is that there are indeed resources within traditional systems—Jainism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Gandhianism, all of which helped shape modern India—to increase awareness of environmental concerns and to instigate the extension of ecological values and modal practices to the plethora of environmental problems facing Indians, as they do in other parts of the world. We are overexploiting natural resources and interfering with the laws of nature. Ancient Indian scriptures and civilization offer us a lot to learn and emulate. Let us keep in mind that a human being needs, by weight,

about twice as much oxygen as food. Trees and forests are the dynamic building blocks of the environment; they are living, biological, water harvesting, groundwater recharging, oxygen producing nature's own air conditioners. Remember: '*Vriksho rakshati rakshitah*; trees protect the protectors'.



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# Educational Philosophy of Swami Vivekananda

Mohit Puri and Dr Pardeep Kumar

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA'S life and mission acts as a bridge of understanding between oriental and occidental cultures. While interpreting Indian philosophy to Eastern and Western minds in an easily understood idiom, Swamiji wanted to usher in a new type of humanity. The rational and vibrant philosophy of Vedanta would crown the West with a lofty spiritual dimension, and India would emerge from her cultural isolation, master science and technology, and adopt humanistic ideas of individual freedom, social equality, and justice. Swamiji's ideas were novel then, and after a century the novelty has become the need of the age. Being a seer Swamiji could foresee the inevitable adjustments necessary for humankind to progress. Swamiji himself was the epitome of his ideas, and his ideas on education not only are relevant and viable today but need to be implemented in letter and spirit.

## Concept of Education

According to Swamiji, proper education is vital to eradicate individual and social ills and to shape the future of a society. He defines the core of his educational philosophy as: 'Education is the manifestation of the perfection already in man.'<sup>1</sup> Elaborating this idea in *Karma Yoga*, Swamiji says: 'What a man "learns" is really what he "discovers", by taking the cover off his own soul, which is a mine of infinite knowledge' (1.28). Swamiji's concept of education is also Vedanta's main principle: knowledge is inherent in

the Atman and needs to be manifested through sadhana. Like a flint needs to be struck to bring out its inherent fire, so also all physical and mental activities are like 'so many blows' to manifest the inherent knowledge. As we begin manifesting the Atman, all impediments fall by themselves. The more knowledge we manifest, the more we move towards perfection.

Perfection means that something is flawless, absolute, complete, or is made whole. The ideal of perfection, which cannot be articulated correctly, is actually what motivates humans towards progress. Thus, every act, including learning and training, is a process directed towards perfection. Keeping this meaning in mind, perfection, in educational parlance, is the goal of actualizing the highest human potential. Temporal goals of education are essentially laid down by each society; they vary from time to time and from society to society. But societies with older educational traditions have withstood many upheavals due to their pursuit of higher goals of everlasting value.

Swamiji's use of the word 'perfection' needs to be viewed at two levels: metaphysical and empirical. The former implies realization of the Atman's ever-perfect nature. Vedanta teaches that human beings are not sinners or absolute victims of circumstances, but the main cause of suffering is ignorance of our perfect nature. Explaining this point Swamiji says: 'The Light Divine within is obscured in most people. It is like a lamp in a cask of iron, no gleam of light

can shine through. Gradually, by purity and unselfishness, we can make the obscuring medium less and less dense, until at last it becomes transparent as glass' (7.21). At the empirical level the concept of perfection has to address various social problems. Swamiji declares: 'While real perfection is only one, relative perfections can be many' (7.20). Our daily life and activities can also become perfect by struggling to overcome problems. Moreover, the empirical struggle for perfection through education becomes meaningful: 'The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs' (7.147–8). Education must provide 'life-building, man-making, character-making assimilation of ideas' (3.302). This ideal of education would produce an integrated person, one who has learned how to sharpen the intellect, purify the emotions, and be established in moral virtues and unselfishness.

There are two levels of education designated in the *Mundaka Upanishad*: *para vidya*, higher knowledge, and *apara vidya*, lower knowledge. This division is merely for practical convenience; *vidya* is a continuum leading a person towards the ultimate goal. Swamiji also observed that the pursuit of knowledge should be a lifelong process. Sri Ramakrishna says: 'As long as I live, so long do I learn.' At the empirical level, today's knowledge explosion can keep people engaged for their entire lives. Therefore, education must be considered a continuous and lifelong process.

As we begin to practice Swamiji's concept of education in daily life, we can refer to three aspects proposed by Israel Scheffler: (i) *capacity*, to acquire a specific characteristic or to become someone who possesses it; (ii) *propensity*, an

attribute that indicates what a person is likely to do when the opportunity comes and freedom of choice is available; and (iii) *capability*, a person's motivation and efficiency in working towards an intended outcome, the strength to get rid of obstacles to learning such as the lack of motivation or obstacles in the environment. Thus, capacity, propensity, and capability respectively emphasize three aspects of education: possibility of learning, development of learning, and self-development or self-empowerment.<sup>2</sup> A child has good and bad potentials of variable worth, therefore the child has to learn to choose which potential to develop and which to minimize, counter, or ignore. As the child's chosen potentials begin to unfold, it should be supervised in order to achieve harmonious development.

### Education's Related Issues

So far our discussion of Swamiji's ideas on education has been a simple examination of his definition of perfection. However, this fails to do justice to some of his ideas on related issues such as the relationship between students and education, education and teachers, education and society, professed goals of education, and social justice. All these related issues can also be explained by further probing into the expressions 'manifestation' and 'already in man' through Swamiji's explanation of one of Patanjali's yoga aphorisms: '*Nimittamprayojakam prakritinam varanabhedastu tatah kshetrikavat*; good and bad deeds are not the direct causes in the transformations of nature, but they act as breakers of obstacles to the evolution of nature: as a farmer breaks the obstacles to the course of water, which then runs down by its own nature.'<sup>3</sup>

A student's inherent power spontaneously manifests when external and internal obstacles are removed by teachers or the education system or society. Some of the external obstacles



are inadequate infrastructure and incompetent teachers, along with unfair distribution of educational resources and opportunities. Some internal obstacles are misunderstandings between teacher and student, the student's limited capacity to study and adapt to changes, as well as the differences in mental capacity. The educational system should help students build a healthy and dynamic mind to meet the challenges of life and prevent future evils. At the same time, the teachers and the designers of the educational systems must always keep in mind the Vedantic idea that a human being is essentially pure and divine and a repository of immense possibilities.

In Swamiji's view the purpose of society is to help secure the well-being of individuals. However, human beings frequently find themselves trapped and threatened in deficient societies. An ideal society should provide resources as well as opportunities for each individual in order to develop his or her potential. It is only in freedom that growth can accelerate. Education has a great role in reaching out to every member of society, while giving special attention to those who are most in need of it. Education in an atmosphere

of freedom, love for knowledge, and cooperation truly enhance society by allowing students to grow into responsible citizens.

Contemporary thinkers on education concur with Swamiji when he asserts that mental training deserves more attention than it had previously received. Training of the mind in all its aspects is conspicuously absent in today's education. The objective side of education was stressed all along, and not the subjective. The latter should be a student's highest priority, and not simply memorization and repetition of facts. In the long run stuffing one's mind with information and useless details only creates more problems if one's mind is not nourished and made healthy through control. Learning to concentrate was very important for Swamiji: 'To me the very essence of education is concentration of mind, not the collecting of facts' (6.38). In doing anything such as thinking, working, and playing, the better the concentration, the better will be the results. The power of keeping the mind on any activity can be improved to a great degree. The primary stage of concentration is learning how to collect the



mind and prevent it from running hither and thither. Next, the student must learn how to maintain the focussed attention for a length of time. A convex lens gathers sunlight and focuses it on one point to burn a piece of paper; likewise, when a mind becomes concentrated it acquires tremendous power and is able to unlock the mysteries of the subject it is focused upon. According to Swamiji, developing willpower is real education: 'The training by which the current and expression of will are brought under control and become fruitful is called education' (4.490). Willpower is necessary not only for learning but also for strengthening one's character. Above all, if love for the subject can be cultivated, it will automatically bring in all these processes and the result will be knowledge.

Every society has its outer aspect, called civilization, and its inner, called culture. A child is moulded and educated through both, which ensures the continuity of beliefs, traditions, and heritage, while reaching out to new knowledge. A society is forever adding to its learning and culture. Knowledge must be enhanced to become part of a person's culture. Swamiji says: 'It is culture that withstands shocks, not a simple mass of knowledge. You can put a mass of knowledge into the world, but that will not do it much good. ... Knowledge is only skin-deep, as civilisation is, and a little scratch brings out the old savage' (3.291). To T S Eliot education was but a manifestation of culture: 'The purpose of education, it seems, is to transmit culture.'<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Swamiji observed that through education a child becomes cultured and its behaviour is moulded accordingly. A cultured society is an ideal society. Everyone is involved in the process of imparting culture: parents, peers, and teachers. But as formal education is becoming more and more institutionalized, teachers are expected to play a more significant role in this

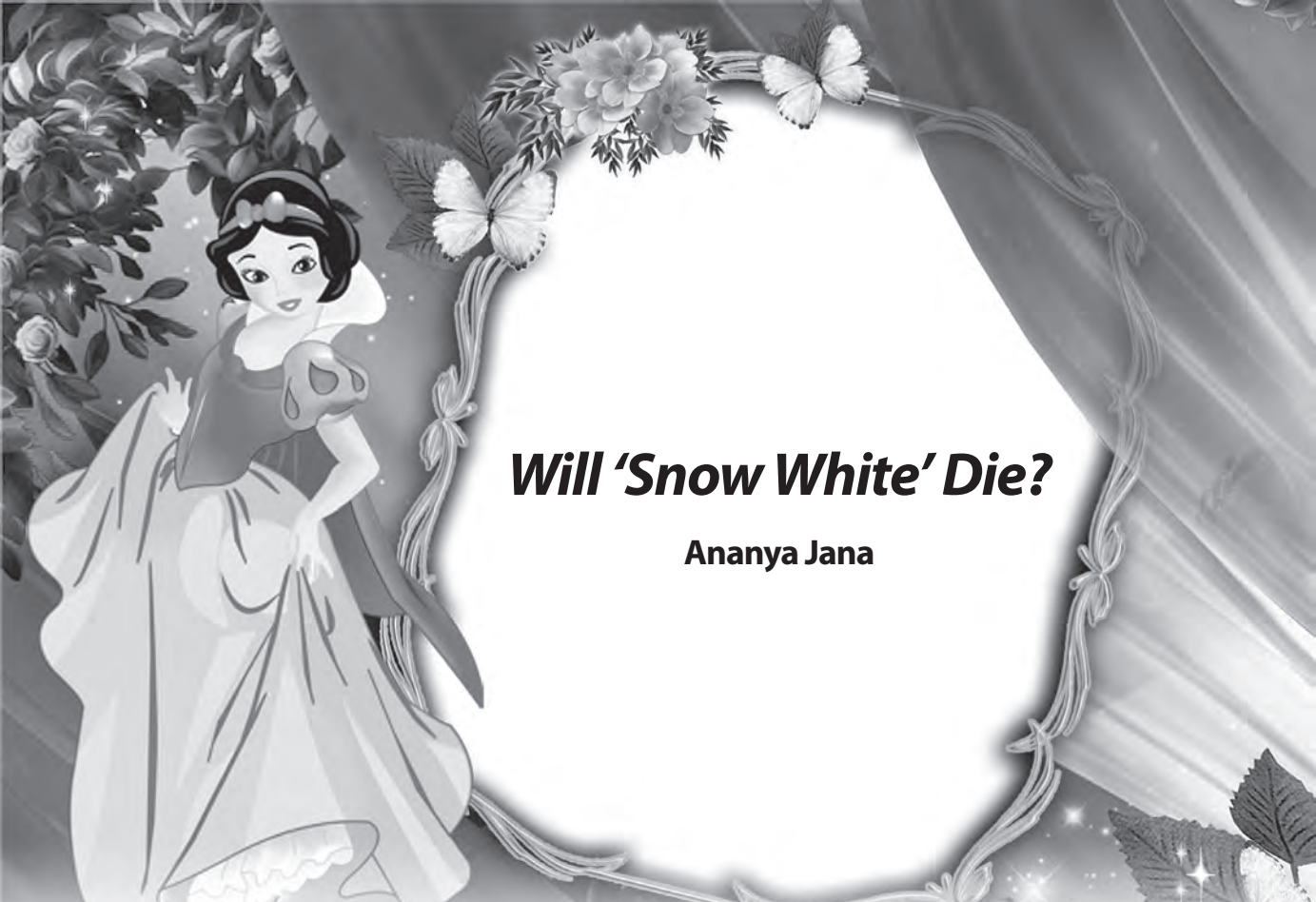
field. A teacher needs to help a student cultivate intelligence, sensitivity, dignity, and self-respect, apart from the studies in the syllabus. This kind of teaching requires moral conviction, intellectual courage, and dedication to students and their future. Above all, the teacher should share with students the conviction that they are metaphysically one in the Atman. Swamiji says: 'The only true teacher is he who can immediately come down to the level of the student, and transfer his soul to the student's soul and see through the student's eyes and hear through his ears and understand through his mind. Such a teacher can really teach and none else.'<sup>5</sup> In such a favourable ambience 'the process of uncovering' the veil of ignorance works smoothly.

On the student's side, in order to facilitate the manifestation of divinity, strength, and knowledge, he or she should cultivate the spirit of *shraddha*, faith, and also respect for the teacher. It creates a favourable environment for learning. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* instructs: '*Acharyadevo bhava*; let your teacher be a god unto you.'<sup>6</sup> Such a teacher-pupil relationship, based on respect and mutual trust, is a fundamental principle in Swamiji's scheme of education. In the Vedic Age teacher and pupils prayed together before starting the lessons, so that they would mutually benefit and be strengthened by the process.

(To be concluded)

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## Will 'Snow White' Die?

Ananya Jana

**A**LTHOUGH I LIVE in a small quaint town, the fast paced world quickened by adrenaline and technology, which till recently seemed so distant, has arrived with its commotion and confusion. In one of India's leading newspapers I came across an article posing this question: 'Why are children unable to retain their innocence and are growing up fast and unabashedly?'<sup>1</sup> Given today's world where children are given adult themes and ideals to emulate, the answer is not very difficult or surprising. The article made me curious to know if other people also paused to ponder the way I did. But at the back of my mind I knew that people generally accept things uncomprehendingly, only to become miserable later. Herein lies the relevance of Swami Vivekananda in our lives. Though Sri Ramakrishna had an impeccable character and immense love for truth and God, Swamiji tested each and every word said by his Great Master. Swamiji later

said to Sister Nivedita: 'Let none regret that they were difficult to convince. I fought my Master for six long years, with the result that I know every inch of the way! Every inch of the way!'<sup>2</sup> We need to incorporate this lesson into our lives. Let us not be blinded by ostentation and superficial things, rather we need to delve into our souls to arrive at answers that corroborate the spiritual knowledge that our ancestors have left for us.


If we carefully note the great literature of the world, we find that many writers were haunted by this question: 'What is the purpose of life?' A few of them, in their sincere quest for answers, discovered the higher or spiritual nature of humankind. If we are able to brush aside the outer differences between the character of Anna, from the novel *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy, and *Hari the Lion*, a parable of Sri Ramakrishna retold by Swami Vivekananda, we will discover to our astonishment that both Anna and Hari wanted



to go where they actually belonged. In the case of Anna the story ends with the protagonist committing suicide, while Hari the lion cub is able to discover his true nature with the help of another wise lion. Each one of us either identify with Anna or Hari. At some point in life we have to face these questions: 'What is wrong with us? Where do we belong?' Once we embark on the quest for answers there are two ways we may be led, or misled. One of the paths, which may appear initially exciting, leaves us groping in the dark. The other path, which at the beginning seems difficult, absurd, and intriguing, ensures the answers we have been seeking for. Anna's insistence on living according to the dictates of her heart makes her a pioneer, though she fails to find the right path. But in the same novel we have another protagonist, Levin, whose quest to set things right takes him through an intellectual and emotional journey that finally gives him happiness. Tolstoy himself says: 'Every time I tried to display my most sincere desire, which was to be morally good, I was met with contempt and ridicule, but as soon as I yielded to low passions I was praised and encouraged.'<sup>3</sup> Herein lies the difficulty in choosing the right path in today's fast paced world.

The world is developing rapidly in all areas except the crucial psychological one, which is taking a confused and wild trajectory. It was in this inner world that India's ancestors were experts, and today we need this expertise more than anything else. Their path initially looks daunting, but if we persist, we are slowly and surely drawn further afield and amply rewarded. That is why Swamiji says: 'To many, Indian thought, Indian manners, Indian customs, Indian philosophy, Indian literature are repulsive at the first sight; but let them persevere, let them read, let them become familiar with the great principles underlying these ideas and it is ninety-nine to one that the charm will come over them, and fascination

will be the result.'<sup>4</sup> When one reaches the very core of the search for meaning in life, one finds that the answers could not have been simpler. This is the most astounding facet of Indian philosophy. In the words of Johann Gottfried Herder, the great German philosopher, theologian, poet, and literary critic: 'Mankind's origins can be traced to India, where the human mind got the first shapes of wisdom and virtue with a simplicity, strength and sublimity which has—frankly speaking— nothing, nothing at all equivalent in our philosophical, cold European world.'<sup>5</sup>

We need to cultivate this ancient inheritance and also protect it for future generations. And without getting into the debate of modernizing literature for children, let us grant them access to what we certainly know is positive. Otherwise, our excessive zeal for modernization will separate innocence from childhood. Let us teach every child to be like Nachiketa, whose character always fascinated Swamiji, and also like Shvetaketu, who was taught by his father: '*Tat tvam asi*, thou art That.' Let us not deny a child's right to fairy tales such as *Snow White*, *Cinderella*, and *The Beauty and the Beast*. If we only water a sapling well, we can expect it to grow and become luxuriant. Similarly, let us give the younger generation a good environment congenial to their growth; only then can we expect them to overcome the myriad problems in this fast paced world. 

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# Women's Moral Subjectivity

Dr Merina Islam

**T**HE WAY PEOPLE look at themselves is ever dynamic, fluctuating, because the process is generally carried out through subjectivity—personal tastes, feelings, opinions. Subjectivity is a social construct subject to many forces, particularly so in contemporary society. Apart from augmenting social development, these fluctuations give rise to a wide spectrum of identity crises: individual, racial, national, and of gender. In addition, old social structures such as property laws, religion, duties, and beliefs, which made women subservient, are being recast. Today's women, through industry and intelligence, are combating the ancient social bias that played against them. The first wave of feminism, devoted to equal rights for women suffrage, profession, education, and other rights, had a long and bitter history in Europe and the US. This wave had a ripple effect all over the world. As women's rights were being mostly met and gradually implemented in many developed and developing countries, the second wave starting in the 1960s, concerned itself with the philosophical implications of woman's subjectivity. This logical step was essential in counteracting ideological traditions, even that of Western philosophy, which tended to define women as inferior and developed the concept of subjectivity as, mainly, masculine. The feminists' first response to such disparagement insisted on women's capacity for moral autonomy and rationality. Soon, however, they began to question the prevailing understanding of autonomy, rationality, morality, and even subjectivity.

## ***Problems of Subjectivity***

The Enlightenment, which swept through Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, brought social changes fostering equality of classes, but did not include in its rhetoric women's rights to liberty and equality. Consequently, women's subordination generated feminism, which began as women associations that fought the unjust social structure characterized by male control through the imposition of traditional roles of reproduction, childcare, and domestic duties on women.

The features of human subjectivity emphasized by many feminist philosophers do not imply that the paradigmatic moral subject should be a woman or even culturally feminine. Instead, it suggests that previous conceptions of human subjectivity, of both women and men, are partial and distorted. Feminist critics point out, not only in Western but in many other cultures as well, that mind and reason are coded masculine, whereas the body and emotions are coded feminine. To identify the human self with the rational mind is, then, to masculinize the self. One corollary of this masculinized view is that women are consigned to selflessness—to subservient passivity and self-sacrificial altruism.

The notion of the human self that dominated Western culture was essentially inherited from the Cartesian view of a disembodied, autonomous, and isolated self. In this dualistic philosophy the mind or subject has no direct knowledge of the material world, including bodies, but only of innate ideas. Both mind

and matter inexplicably interact through God's agency. Many studies on the human self and subjectivity that gradually followed replaced earlier conceptions in those fields. Karl Marx's concept posits a subject that is determined by historical contingencies and consequently dismantles the Cartesian subject. According to Sigmund Freud, personal identity is constituted by sex identity. Carl Jung proposed that the self is a totality of conscious and subconscious contents that checks the ego, and that the process of individuation is the goal of a healthy personality. Jean Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg assert that development towards autonomy goes through a series of stages and is the paradigm of healthy subjectivity. Karen Horney and other psychological theorists argued that the self is constructed partly through social relations. The 'object relation' theory describes the self as having no fixed essential core, but it becomes what it is through relationship with others. The centrality in the feminist's critique of an autonomous self centres on the excessive male prejudice against it and proposes that an adequate notion of self must be embodied, contextualized, interdependent, and communicative.

### Contemporary Theories

The topic of subjectivity is salient in feminist philosophy because it questions and addresses personhood, identity, body, and agency. In some respects Simone de Beauvoir's trenchant observation sums up why the self is an important issue: 'He is the subject, he is the absolute—she is the other.'<sup>1</sup> She asks: 'What is woman? Why is she defined as "other?"' (Ibid.). To be 'other' is to be a non-subject, a non-person, a non-agent, in short, a mere body. In this definition a woman's subjectivity is denied and the moral realm is supposed to be grounded in an inherently masculine concept. Mary Wollstonecraft, in order to

fit women into a rational and autonomous definition of subjectivity, argues that moral values have no gender and regards feminine virtues as manifestations of true human virtues. These were the concepts till modern times.

In contemporary feminist and gender theories the intersections of subjectivity and embodiment are explored very differently. These theories focus on two issues: 'essential woman' and 'dialectical subject'. Elizabeth Spelman's *Inessential Woman*<sup>2</sup> presents arguments against 'essentialism' by asserting that such a concept results in a hierarchical ranking of categories. Some women will be defined as conforming to the 'true woman' category, while those who fall short of this ideal will be ranked inferior.<sup>3</sup> Diana Fuss maintains that essentialism is neither inherently good nor bad but a concept that can be used either progressively or conservatively. Fuss also maintains that the dichotomy between essentialism and constructionism is a product of binary thinking, which is the cause of the problems faced by feminists. She claims that the deconstructionists have not moved beyond epistemological boundaries of the essentialist subject.<sup>4</sup>

On the theory of 'dialectical subject' Tasmin Lorraine holds that there are two different concepts of the subject: the humanist subject, which is a unified rational subject, a self-interested agent; and the postmodern or post-structuralist subject, which is a constructive self with no coherent account of freedom, responsibility, or authenticity. According to Lorraine, a dialectical subject is an entity produced by social codes. She attempts to reconcile elements of the Cartesian and the modernist subject with a constructed subject identified with postmodernism or post-structuralism.<sup>5</sup> Diana Meyers, however, argues that it is a mistake to view the moral subject as independent,



transparent, and rational. Instead, she presents a heterogeneous and pluralistic subject, one that is defined by ties to other people, liable to misunderstand its motives and aims, and is in need of a repertory of strategies for moral reflection. Meyers employs essentialist and constructionist language to show woman as an extreme example of dialectical subject.<sup>6</sup>

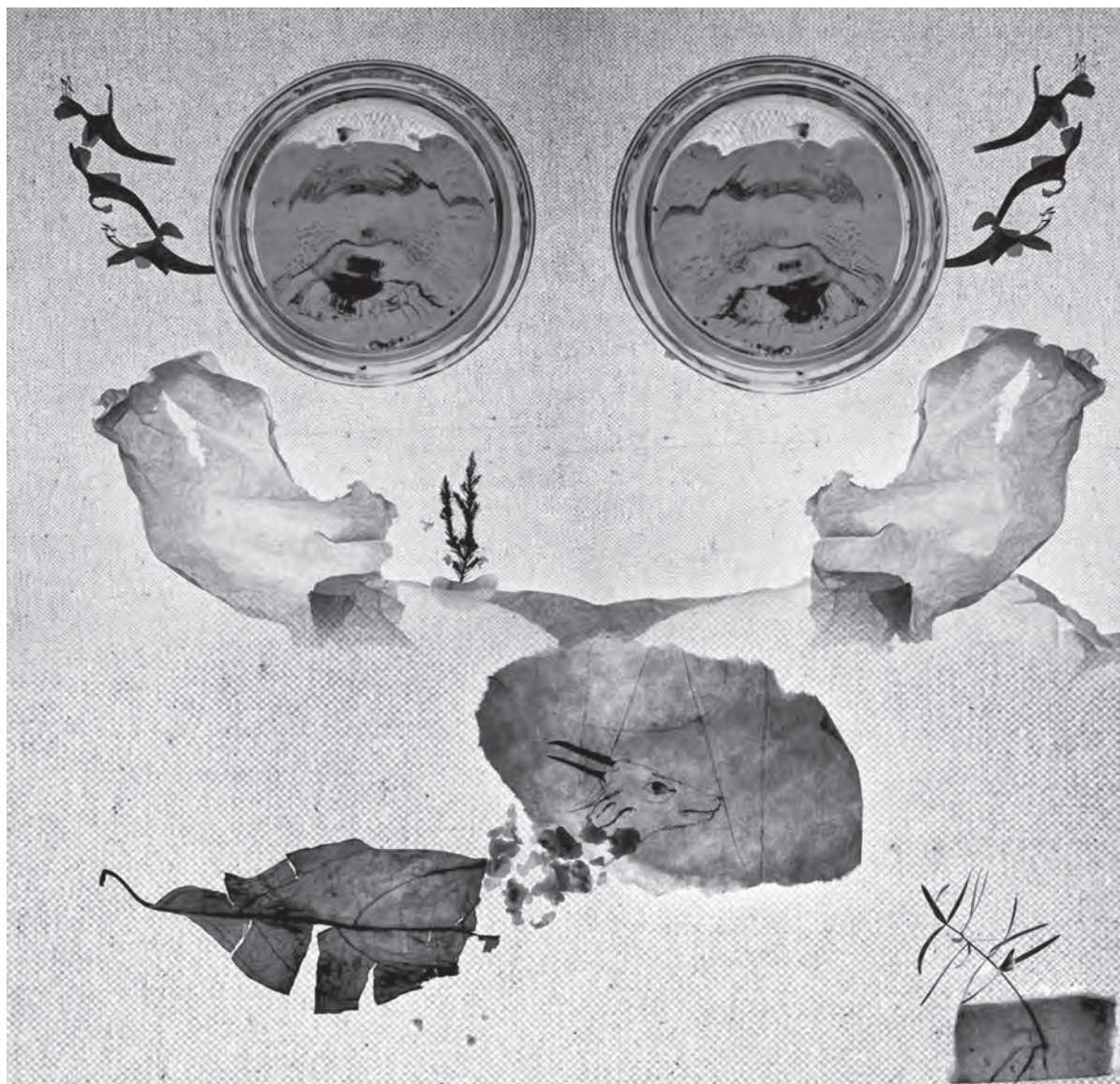
Linda Alcoff tries to establish a dialectical interaction between elements of an essential subject and a constructed subject. Unlike Meyers, Alcoff is concerned in bridging the gap between the essentialist feminine subject of the cultural feminists and the subject of postmodernism. Rejecting both views she construes femininity as 'positionality'. Positionality has two dimensions: one is the social context, which locates the individual that deprives her of power and mobility; the other is the affirmation of women's collective right to take charge of their gendered identity. To be a woman is to be deprived of equality, and to be a feminist is to take responsibility for redressing this wrong and for redefining the meaning of being a woman.<sup>7</sup> Alcoff salvages the category 'woman' by defending an interpretation of the social meaning of being a woman.

Feminist analyses of women's capacities acknowledge traditional feminine social roles and contributions, and provide accounts of how women can overcome oppressive norms and practices. Alcoff believes that a woman creates her identity from the mix of discursive forces that is available to her in her situation. Like Alcoff, Teresa de Lauretis explicitly argues for a dialectical approach and defines the subject as expressed through an interaction of inner and outer worlds. Each individual's 'subjective engagement' with the world forms the basis of her identity. She states the obvious, that a feminine subject is constituted across a number of

discourses that frequently conflict. She points to the fact that studies have reconstituted both the method and object of knowledge, producing new knowledge and transforming the conditions of knowing. Reshaping knowledge, she states, is to reconstitute women as social subjects and as the subject of both knowledge and knowing.<sup>8</sup> This understanding avoids casting women as victims, and while recognizing the ways women are discursively positioned, it transforms systems of difference. It seeks to redefine knowledge from the images and desires through which we make ourselves and find a basis for reconceiving subjectivity.

### ***Subjectivity in Postmodernism and Post-structuralism***

Meyers, Alcoff, and de Lauretis criticized postmodernism for failing to provide a coherent concept of subject. That the postmodern approach is perceived as both a threat and an opportunity for feminism, is evident in the intense debate it has generated in feminist theories. Julia Kristeva transposes the classic Freudian concept of self and the distinction between the conscious and the unconscious into an explicitly gendered discursive framework. For Kristeva, self is a subject of enunciation—a speaker who can use the pronoun 'I'. But speakers are not unitary, nor are they fully in control of what they say because their discourse is bifurcated. The symbolic dimension of language, which is characterized by referential signs and linear logic, corresponds to consciousness and control. The clear dry prose of scientific research epitomizes the symbolic discourse; the semiotic dimension of language—characterized by figurative language, cadences, and intonations—corresponds to the unruly passion-fuelled unconscious. The ambiguities and non-standard usages of poetry epitomize



*'Hidden Beyond Sight', by Sohini Dasgupta*

the semiotic discourse. These paradigms notwithstanding, Kristeva maintains that all discourse combines elements of both registers. Every intelligible utterance relies on semantic conventions, and every utterance has a tone, even if it is a dull monotone.<sup>9</sup>

Since rational orderliness of the symbolic is a culturally coded masculine, while the emotion-charged allure of the semiotic is culturally coded feminine, it follows that no discourse

is purely masculine or feminine. The masculine symbolic and the feminine semiotic are equally indispensable to the speaking subject, whatever be the individual's socially assigned gender. It is not possible to be an unsullied masculine or feminine self. Every subject of enunciation amalgamates masculine and feminine discursive modalities. Moreover, Kristeva's account of the self displaces 'masculine' adherence to principle as the prime mode of ethical agency and

recognizes the urgent need for a 'feminine' ethical approach. Kristeva neutralizes the fear of the inchoate feminine that, in her view, underlines misogyny by viewing the self as a subject who is responsive to the semiotic material into conscious life. Such a subject is therefore without a fixed identity.

French theorists, particularly Luce Irigaray, Helene Cixous, and Kristeva, have established a number of themes that transform discussions on subjectivity and provide a new approach to moral subjectivity. The central theme of these theorists is the significance of discourse and the link between discourse and subjectivity. Kristeva avoids the pitfall of searching for woman's identity by instead speculating on woman's discourse. Irigaray has done the most to revolutionize the discussion of the feminine subject by maintaining that the first task as feminists is to interrogate philosophical discourses that uncover the coherence of discursive utterance. Discourses, she claims, both produce and reproduce subjects.<sup>10</sup>

In one respect, Nancy Chodorow's appropriation of the object relations theory parallels Kristeva's project of reclaiming and revaluing femininity. Chodorow's account of the relational self reclaims and revalues feminine *mothering* capacities. Kristeva focuses on challenging the homogeneous self and the line between reason and emotion. She also focuses on challenging the self with its sharp 'other-self' boundaries. Chodorow sees the self as relational: every child is cared for by an adult or adults and is shaped for better or worse by this emotionally charged interaction. As a result of needs and moments of frustration, the infant becomes differentiated from its primary caregiver and develops a sense of separate identity and a distinctive personality. By selectively internalizing and recombining elements of their

experience with other people, children develop characteristic traits and dispositions. Whereas Kristeva understands the self as the dynamic interplay between the feminine semiotic and the masculine symbolic, Chodorow understands the self as fundamentally relational and thus linked to cultural norms of feminine interpersonal responsiveness. For Chodorow the rigidly differentiated, compulsively rational, stubbornly independent self is a masculine defensive formation—a warped form of the relational self—that develops as a result of fathers' negligible involvement in childcare.<sup>11</sup>

Post-structuralist Judith Butler's proposition 'challenged the claim that feminist politics requires a distinct identity for women. Arguing that identity is the product or result of actions rather than the source of it.'<sup>12</sup> She maintains that personal identity, the sense that there are answers to questions such as 'who am I?' and 'what am I like?' is an illusion. The self is merely an unstable discursive node, and gendered identity is merely a 'corporeal style', the imitation and repeated enactment of ubiquitous norms. For Butler, psychodynamic accounts of the self, including Kristeva's and Chodorow's, camouflage the performative nature of the self and collaborate in the cultural conspiracy that maintains the illusion that one has an emotionally anchored interior identity derived from one's biological nature and manifest in one's genitalia. Butler wants to show that gender is not just a social construct but a kind of performance, a show we put on, and hence it is far from our essence. Butler argues that 'even if the sexes appear to be unproblematically binary in their morphology and constitution, there is no reason to assume that genders ought also to remain as two', and hence 'man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine a male



body as easily as a female one.’<sup>13</sup> She asserts that subjectivity is like a work of art and gender is a project, a skill, and an enterprise. Butler then looks at psychoanalysis as a ‘grand narrative’ about how ‘woman’ as a unitary category is formed. Psychoanalysis is a story about origins and ends, which includes some aspects and excludes others. The story starts with a utopian non-differentiation of the sexes and ends by enforcing separation and the creation of difference. This narrative ‘gives a false sense of legitimacy and universality to a culturally specific and, in some cases, culturally oppressive version of gender identity’ (21).

Many feminist philosophers argue that a relational concept of moral subjectivity is empirically adequate and generates moral values and rationality, which is superior to Enlightenment’s rationality and the assertion of individualism over the traditional. For instance, it encourages women to seek resolutions to conflicts by means that promise to repair and strengthen relationships, to practise positive caretaking rather than respectful non-intervention, and to prioritize personal values of care, trust, attentiveness, and love for others. Above all, it affirms impersonal principles of equality, respect, and rights.

To the feminists, a woman’s moral agency is not restricted to the ‘justice voice’ of the modernist tradition, she rather expresses herself in many different moral voices. Carol Gilligan has shown that gender plays a major role in the constitution of the moral voice. But apart from gender other factors such as race, class, language, religion, and country are also constitutive. Feminists suggest a new array of definitions for moral voices and a new approach to the articulation of moral subjectivity. Nothing would be gained by conceptualizing the different voices either as ‘essentially female’ or by assuming that

they are characteristic of all women. Furthermore, having established the relational concept of moral voices, it would be exceedingly odd if feminists conclude that gender is the only variable in women’s subjectivity.



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# Sri Ramakrishna: The 'New Man' of the Age – V

Swami Bhajananda

(Continued from the previous issue)

## Characteristics of the Golden Age

WE HAVE SEEN THAT, according to Swami Vivekananda, the spiritual evolution of humanity would culminate in a period of spiritual efflorescence known as Satya Yuga, the Golden Age. The first period of spiritual efflorescence that happened in India was the Vedic Age. A second period of spiritual efflorescence has been now inaugurated by Sri Ramakrishna. It is clear from Swamiji's speeches and letters that he had a vision about the new Golden Age. Some of the characteristic features of the Satya Yuga that Swamiji envisioned are mentioned below.

**(i) Rishis and Prophets Would Be Numerous** • According to Swami Vivekananda, the Golden Age will be an epoch of illumined souls. The main feature of the Vedic period was that the majority of the people who lived in that age were illumined souls known as rishis, seers. In later centuries the fully illumined person was called a *jīvanmukta*. Sri Ramakrishna called that person a *vijñāni*. Swamiji wanted to recapture the ambience of the Vedic period, and so he reintroduced the term 'rishi' and its Western equivalent 'prophet'. Moreover, 'rishi' is a term with wider connotations. A rishi is one who has attained transcendental vision, *krānta-darśin*.

Swamiji explains the term as follows: 'He who realizes transcendental truth, he who realizes the Atman in his own nature, he who comes face to face with God, sees God alone in everything, has

become a Rishi. And there is no religious life for you until you have become a Rishi. Then alone religion begins for you, now is only the preparation. Then religion dawns upon you, now you are only undergoing intellectual gymnastics and physical tortures.'<sup>26</sup>

During the Vedic period the Indo-Gangetic plain was dotted with hundreds of hermitages, ashramas, in which lived illumined rishis. Seekers of wisdom flocked to these hermitages to sit at the feet of those illumined sages and in their turn themselves became illumined. Everywhere in the Upanishads we find fundamental questions about life and reality being raised by earnest seekers of truth. Swami Vivekananda visualized a similar situation taking place in the future. In an impassioned oration, remarkable for the startling foresights that it reveals, Swamiji stated:

There were times in olden days when prophets were many in every society. The time is to come *when prophets will walk through every street in every city in the world.* ... Schools and colleges should be training grounds for prophets. The whole universe must become prophets; and until a man becomes a prophet, religion is a mockery and a byword unto him. ... We have to work now so that every one will become a prophet. There is a great work before us. [Emphasis added.]

In old times, many did not understand what a prophet meant. They thought it was something by chance, that just by a fiat of will or



some superior intelligence, a man gained superior knowledge. In modern times, we are prepared to demonstrate that this knowledge is the birthright of every living being, whosoever and wheresoever he be. ... This, the training of prophets, is the great work that lies before us' (6.10–11).

This is undoubtedly an astounding statement. Swamiji must have been seeing far into the future. It is not for ordinary mortals like us to question the truth of such prophetic statements or understand their real significance. We can, however, be sure of one thing: spirituality will be the zeitgeist, or a dominant trend, in human society in the future.

**(ii) Unity of the East and the West** • World culture consists of two major divisions: Eastern and Western. At present these two divisions have met and are interacting. Swami Vivekananda was one of the earliest thinkers to build bridges between them. In recent years the globalization of economy, education, spirituality, the Internet, and other factors are bringing the two cultures closer together. Swamiji believed that in the Golden Age the two cultures will unite giving rise to a homogeneous culture. Not only that, Swamiji also believed that out of the fusion of these two cultures there will arise a superior type of person. In a letter to the Diwan, minister, of a princely state in India Swamiji wrote: 'With proper care and attempt and struggle of

all her [India's] disinterested sons, by combining some of the active and heroic elements of the West with calm virtues of the Hindus, there will come a type of men far superior to any that have ever been in this world' (8.322). Furthermore, Swamiji said: 'In the present age, it is to bring into coalition both these civilizations [Indian and Western] that Bhagavan Shri Ramakrishna was born' (6.463).

**(iii) Equality and Love** • It was Swami Vivekananda's belief that, under the influence of Sri Ramakrishna's life and teachings, a new society would come into existence in which all inequalities would be ironed out. Swamiji wrote in a letter:

From the very date that he was born, has sprung the Satya-Yuga (Golden Age). Henceforth there is an end to all sorts of distinctions, and everyone down to the Chandala will be a sharer in the Divine Love. The distinction between man and woman, between the rich and the poor, the literate and the illiterate, Brahmins and Chandalas—he lived to root out all. And he was the harbinger of Peace—the separation between Hindus and Mahomedans, between Hindus and Christians, all are now things of the past. ... In this Satya Yuga the tidal wave of Shri Ramakrishna's Love has unified all (6.335).

The love that Sri Ramakrishna taught through his life was not the emotional, self-centred, impure, possessive, limited, impermanent love of ordinary people. His love is spiritual, divinized, boundless, universal, which is an expression of the spiritual unity of all selves in the supreme

PHOTO BY PEDRO ALBERT CARREÑO

Self. In the Satya Yuga all human relationships will be based on this kind of pure, universal, spiritual love, which does not cause bondage.

This spiritual love finds expression in selfless service and all work as worship. Swamiji said: 'Let us try to make things simpler and bring about the golden days when every man will be a worshipper, and the Reality in every man will be the object of worship' (2.358).

**(iv) The Courage to Be** • In modern consumer society people are valued not for what they *are* but for what they *have*. As psychologist Eric Fromm has pointed out: 'Modern man *has* everything, a car, a house, a job, "kids", a marriage, problems, troubles, satisfactions—and if all this is not enough, he has his psychoanalyst. He *is* nothing.'<sup>27</sup> Too much importance is given to the possession of objects because of the mistaken notion that happiness lies in external objects. According to Vedanta, happiness is an essential aspect of the Atman. The Atman is of the nature of *sat-cit-ānanda*, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. *Ānanda*, joy, is not something one has to acquire from outside; it is inseparable from one's true existence as the Atman. For an illumined person existence itself, life itself, is joy. That is why in India an illumined soul is described as *ātmārāma*, one who delights in one's own inner Self.

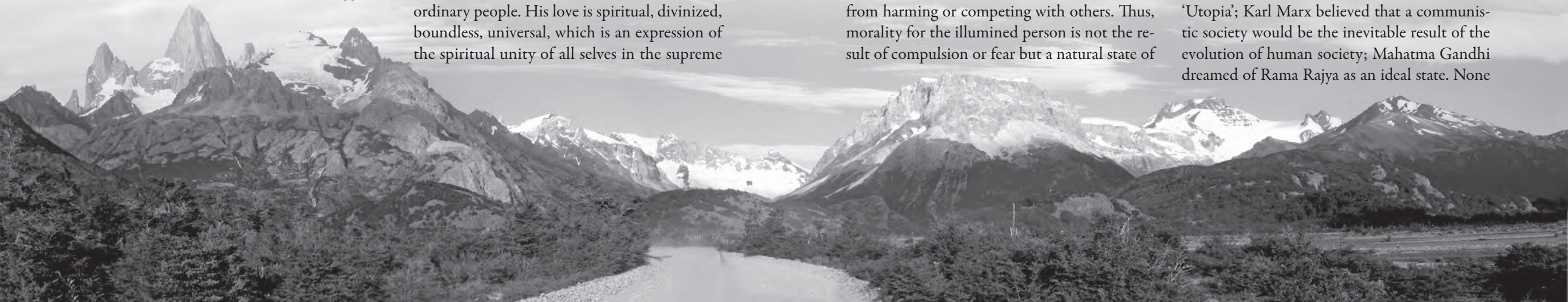
The realization that purity, goodness, love, and other virtues are inherent in the Atman and constitute our real nature will prevent us from harming or competing with others. Thus, morality for the illumined person is not the result of compulsion or fear but a natural state of

being. It is the self-assertion of the intrinsic purity, goodness, and divinity of the soul under all circumstances in one's life. Virtue or morality is the 'courage to be'—one's own true nature, the Atman—even in the midst of evil.

The attitude of 'to be', instead of the attitude of 'to have', will be the dominant attitude of the future human being. This is clear from the fact that 'learning to be' is one of the recommendations made by the two recent Commissions on Education set up by UNESCO.

**(v) Unity of Spirituality and Science** • The unity of science and spirituality will be one of the most notable and practicable features of the Golden Age visualized by Swami Vivekananda. Religion is burdened with dogma, mythology, ritual, cult, and so forth, and hence it is difficult to reconcile religion with science. But spirituality is concerned primarily with direct experiences that can be verified. Moreover, the connecting link between spirituality and science has been found: it is consciousness. Now science has also started studying consciousness. As a result, spirituality is now emerging as the 'science of consciousness'. Swami Vivekananda had spoken of this more than a hundred years ago.

**(vi) Utopia or Reality?** • The ideal of a Golden Age had been propounded by several eminent thinkers in the past. Plato wrote about an ideal republic; St Augustine wrote about the 'City of God'; Sir Thomas Moore visualized a 'Utopia'; Karl Marx believed that a communist society would be the inevitable result of the evolution of human society; Mahatma Gandhi dreamed of Rama Rajya as an ideal state. None





of these prognostications proved to be true. This raises the question: Will Swami Vivekananda's vision of the Golden Age become a reality? There is every possibility that Swamiji's vision will become a reality on this good earth of ours in the future. The reason supporting this statement is the coming together and possible unification of four of the great civilizing forces of humanity: morality, spirituality, education, and science.

Morality had till recently been an appendage of religion, but now it has been freed from its limitations and has become secular and universal. Spirituality also, having been freed from religion, has become secular and universal. Education has also assumed universal dimensions. Science has always been universal. The combination of these four universal disciplines can exert such a tremendous force upon the course of human history that historical progression can be accelerated and can culminate in the Golden Age as foreseen by Swamiji.

### ***Sri Ramakrishna as the Ideal of the Golden Age***

Swamiji regarded Sri Ramakrishna as the prophet of the Golden Age. In a letter to Haridas Viharidas Desai, a distinguished statesman of those days, Swamiji wrote:

Every new religious wave requires a new centre. The old religion can only be revived by a new centre. Hang your dogmas or doctrines, they never pay. It is a character, a life, a centre, a God-man that must lead the way, that must be the centre round which all other elements will gather themselves and then fall like a tidal wave upon the society, carrying all before it, washing away all impurities. ... Now do you think you have already seen the nucleus of such a great movement, that you have heard the low rumblings of the coming tidal wave? That centre, that God-man to lead was born in India. He was the great Ramakrishna Paramahansa, and round him this band is slowly gathering (8.308-9).

Swami Vivekananda spoke of Sri Ramakrishna as the ideal of India and of the modern world, and by 'ideal' he meant both subjective and objective ideals. In the prevailing world situation, dominated by consumerism, commercialism, pleasure-seeking, as well as social, religious, and political conflicts and problems, the true significance of Swamiji's statement may not be apparent to all, except a small minority of enlightened people. However, from the discussion on the characteristics of the Golden Age given above we can see that Swamiji's statement is most likely to become a reality in the Golden Age.

In the light of the description of the Satya Yuga envisioned by Swamiji, we can see that Sri Ramakrishna's life is a prefiguration of the type of life that a large number of people are likely to lead in the Golden Age. Sri Ramakrishna would then be considered to be the role model or prototype for the people in this age.

Swamiji saw in Sri Ramakrishna the image of the perfect man. He once told a disciple of his: 'But take it from me, never did come to this earth such an all-perfect man as Shri Ramakrishna!' (6.480). Only a perfect man can serve as the ideal for the new age, not an ordinary person. One of the signs of perfection that Swamiji saw in Sri Ramakrishna was his absolute, immaculate purity. 'It is the purest of lives ever lived,' Swamiji remarked once.

Another sign was the all-round, total development of personality that Sri Ramakrishna had attained. About this point Swamiji said: 'Such a unique personality, such a synthesis of the utmost of Jnana, Yoga, Bhakti and Karma, has never before appeared among mankind. The life of Sri Ramakrishna proves that the greatest breadth, the highest catholicity and the utmost intensity can exist side by side in the same individual, and that society also can be constructed

like that, for society is nothing but an aggregate of individuals' (7.412).

However, the most remarkable aspect of Sri Ramakrishna's personality is the vast range of transcendental realizations he had. He was several prophets rolled into one; he embodied the spiritual consciousness of all the previous prophets of world religions. This trait alone is enough to make him the ideal for the Golden Age because, as we have seen, prophethood of the common man would be a characteristic feature of the Golden Age.

Every person has in him or her the potentiality to attain transcendental spiritual experience, to realize God, to become a rishi or prophet in his or her own right. In Mahayana Buddhism every person is regarded as a potential Buddha. Swami Vivekananda saw immense spiritual potential in every individual. Therefore, he declared: 'I should better like that each one of you become a Prophet of this real New Testament, which is made up of all the Old Testaments. Take all the old messages, supplement them with your own realizations, and become a Prophet unto others. ... This very moment let everyone of us make a staunch resolution: "I will become a Prophet, I will become a messenger of Light, I will become a child of God, nay, I will become a God!"' (4.134).

This great exhortation of Swamiji is seldom quoted, and is perhaps much less responded to. But it will continue to reverberate in the corridors of time, gaining in volume as more and more people respond to it, until it culminates in the spiritual symphony of the Golden Age.

## Conclusion

In this series of articles, which have been appearing in *Prabuddha Bharata* from January 2011 as 'Sri Ramakrishna: The "New Man" of the Age', we have made a modest attempt to make a fairly

comprehensive study of the phenomenon of Sri Ramakrishna's avatara-hood. The main features of Sri Ramakrishna's avatara-hood we have covered are summed up below.

- (1) Sri Ramakrishna as the breaker of bonds.
- (2) Sri Ramakrishna as the door to the Infinite.
- (3) Sri Ramakrishna as the revelation of the ultimate Reality.
- (4) Sri Ramakrishna as the Ishta Devata.
- (5) Sri Ramakrishna's grace as the direct means.
- (6) Sri Ramakrishna the lover of humanity.
- (7) Sri Ramakrishna and divine motherhood.
- (8) Sri Ramakrishna's life of self-sacrifice for others.
- (9) Sri Ramakrishna's life as divine yoga, divine *tapas*, divine lila.
- (10) Sri Ramakrishna's life as the culmination of five thousand years of the spiritual life of Indian culture.
- (11) Sri Ramakrishna as world teacher.
- (12) Sri Ramakrishna and the spiritual renaissance.
- (13) Sri Ramakrishna as the spiritual ideal of the modern world.

This study of the avatara-hood of Sri Ramakrishna has been undertaken with the following purposes in mind.

(a) To have a proper understanding of the true greatness of Sri Ramakrishna, who is now the object of love and adoration of millions of people. Even in worldly life, lack of proper understanding is one of the main causes of failure in love. To make our love for God authentic, unwavering, and eternal it is necessary to have a proper understanding of God's real greatness, *mahimā* or *māhātmya*.

(b) To make known to the world the unique contributions of Sri Ramakrishna to Indian culture and to world culture.

(c) To remove some of the misconceptions about Sri Ramakrishna's avatara-hood.

(d) To show the important historical role of Sri Ramakrishna in the ongoing spiritual transformation of human consciousness.

(e) Lastly, this study is intended to serve as our humble homage to Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna on the occasion of the celebration of his 175th birth anniversary.

This study has covered only certain aspects of the avatara-hood of Sri Ramakrishna. It may take several centuries for the great possibilities and immense Shakti involved in the avatara-hood of Sri Ramakrishna to manifest themselves fully for the welfare of the world.

No one in the world ever understood, or can possibly understand, the true significance and implications of Sri Ramakrishna's avatara-hood more than Swami Vivekananda. Moreover, Swami Vivekananda was not only endowed with extraordinary intellectual and spiritual powers as well as a prophetic vision capable of seeing far into the future, but also he was a highly rational person who never allowed himself to be limited by narrow emotional or cultic considerations or made unauthenticated statements to mislead people. Hence, Swamiji's statements on Sri Ramakrishna have veracity and trustworthiness ingrained in them. The present discourse on the avatara-hood of Sri Ramakrishna can have no better conclusion than the following statement of Swamiji.

So at the very dawn of this momentous epoch, the reconciliation of all aspects and ideals of religious thought and worship is being proclaimed; this boundless, all-embracing idea had been lying inherent, but so long sealed, in the Religion Eternal and its scriptures, and now re-discovered, it is being declared to humanity in a trumpet voice.

This epochal new dispensation is the


harbinger of great good to the whole world, specially to India, and the inspirer of this dispensation, Shri Bhagavan Ramakrishna, is the reformed and remodelled manifestation of all the past great epoch-makers in religion. O man, have faith in this, and lay it to heart.

The dead never return; the past night does not reappear; a spent-up tidal wave does not rise anew; neither does man inhabit the same body again. So from the worship of the dead past, O man, we invite you to the worship of the living present; from the regretful brooding over by-gones, we invite you to the activities of the present; from the waste of energy in retracing lost and demolished pathways, we call you back to the broad new-laid highways lying very near. He that is wise, let him understand (6.185–6).

In order to respond to this clarion call of Swamiji all that one has to do is to release one's faith. Everyone has in him or her inborn faith, but it usually remains imprisoned by the walls of ignorance and delusion. In the Pali scriptures of Buddhism there is the following anecdote. After attaining Bodhi, full spiritual illumination, when Buddha decided to preach the new Dharma to the world, the gods rejoiced. They declared in one voice:

*Apāvṛtaṁ teṣāṁ amṛtasya dvāram,  
He śrotṛvantaḥ pramuñcantu śraddhām.*

Opened is the door to immortality for you; he who has heard this [news] let him release his faith.<sup>28</sup>

This declaration is true for the avatara-hood of Sri Ramakrishna as well. 

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# Aspects of Western Philosophy and Swami Vivekananda

Dr Pramila Davidson

(Continued from the previous issue)

## Schopenhauer and the Concept of Will

ARTHUR SCHOPENHAUER WAS greatly influenced by Indian thought, especially the Upanishads, which he read in various translations. Unlike Mahatma Gandhi, whose life is a working out of his philosophy, Schopenhauer's life and ideas are poles apart. The famous line from Shakespeare 'stale, flat and unprofitable are to me the uses of this world'<sup>11</sup> is an apt description of Schopenhauer's state of mind. He was born into an affluent family. His father wanted him to be a businessman like himself, but committed suicide when Schopenhauer was just seventeen. Young Arthur did not have a caring and nurturing mother, though she was liberal enough to leave him free to pursue an academic career.

Schopenhauer was very open and articulate about his admiration for the Upanishads. His work is a testament to an ardent interest in Indian philosophy—I use 'Indian philosophy' to include both Vedanta and Buddhism. He was much influenced by the *mahavakya* from the *Chhandogya Upanishad* 'Tat tvam asi', which is mentioned in his magnum opus *The World as Will and Idea*.<sup>12</sup> It is unfortunate that Schopenhauer was not very successful either as a professor or as a philosopher until the last years of his life. He detested Hegel and actually scheduled his lectures at the University of Berlin at the same time as Hegel.

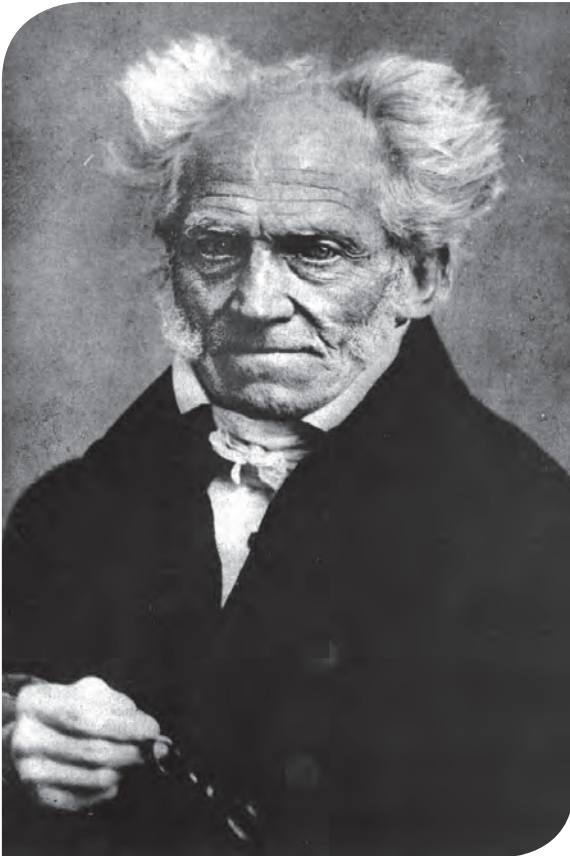
He calls Hegel 'that intellectual Caliban' (8). His classes were empty, Hegel was popular. He abandoned his teaching career in sheer frustration. Now that the dust has settled, Schopenhauer and Hegel are both considered major figures in Western philosophy.

Sometimes a similar experience can result in divergent responses. Mozart's music was not greatly appreciated during his lifetime. It is said that when he died only a dog followed his hearse. Yet, there is sweetness both in his life and in his music. There are elements of emotional ambivalence or paranoia in Schopenhauer's personality: he slept with a loaded gun, never allowed a barber to shave his neck, and was afraid of his drinking water being infected. Upanishadic ideas inspired him, but could not wipe out the trauma of his early years. He was not able to completely understand, absorb, or internalize those ideas. His pessimism is closer to Ecclesiastes: 'I have seen all things that are done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a chase after wind. ... For in much wisdom there is sorrow, and he who stores up knowledge stores up grief.'<sup>13</sup>

Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Idea* starts with a striking assertion: 'The world is my idea.'<sup>14</sup> The 'I' is the subject and the world is the object. Schopenhauer's focus is on the relationship between subject and object. In Kant's terminology, the world exists as a thing-in-itself. As

we have seen, in this sense, we can never know it. Our understanding of the world is limited by our individual consciousness. Schopenhauer develops Kant's ideas and adds new insights. He uses the example of his body to bring out another dimension—I know my body as I know other external objects around me, for example, flowers, tables, or the bodies of other human beings. There is, however, a crucial difference. I know my body not just as I know other objects in the world, externally, as an object extended in space, but also from the inside. Drinking a glass of milk is not the same as watching someone else doing it. Filling a glass with milk or raising it to my mouth to drink it is an act of will. In this sense my body is a representation, objective, external. It is my will objectified, that is, an act of perception.

Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860)



There is a feeling of satisfaction as we drink the milk. From this perspective the will is internal, subjective. Thus, there is one thing that I know as the thing-in-itself: my body. This thing-in-itself is not something we perceive with our intellect. It is the manifestation of energy in us. Schopenhauer calls it 'will'. The energy generated by the will pervades the world. It is present in forces of nature like gravity. The will is metaphysical, fundamental, and unknowable. It is the only thing-in-itself, the essential universal energy. It has no mind, intellect, rationality, or aim. It is the foundation of our instincts. All we can grasp is the effect the will has on specific matter. In human beings it surfaces in the shape of desires such as hunger, thirst, the will to live, to be happy, and so on. The will is not subject to the constraints of time, space, or causation. It is more fundamental than thought. It is inexhaustible. Here is a brief sketch of Schopenhauer's line of argument:

Thus no truth is more certain, more independent of all others, and less in need of proof, than this: that all that is there for the knowing—that is, this whole world—is object in relation to the subject, perception of the perceiver—in a word, idea (*ibid.*).

This truth is by no means new. ... How early this truth was recognized by the wise men of India, in that it features as the fundamental tenet of the Vedanta philosophy ascribed to Vyasa. ...

The fundamental tenet of the Vedanta school consisted not in denying the existence of matter that is, of solidity, impenetrability, and extended figure ... and in contending that it has no essence independent of mental perception; that existence and perceptibility are convertible terms.<sup>15</sup>

For as the world is in one aspect entirely *idea*, so in another it is entirely *will*. ...

That which knows all things, and is known

by none, is the subject ... the world as idea ... has two essential, necessary, and inseparable halves. The one half is the *object*, the forms of which are space and time, and through these plurality. The other half is the subject, which is not in space and time, for it is whole and undivided, in every percipient being. ... So that any one percipient being together with the object, constitutes the whole world as idea just as fully as do the existing millions; but if this one were to disappear, then the world as idea would cease to be.<sup>16</sup>

Every individual act, ... [is] nothing but the manifestation of the will, the becoming visible, *the objectification of the will* (41).

I shall call the body the *objectivity* of my will (33).

The world, like man, is through and through *will*, and through and through *idea*, and beyond that there is nothing else (83).

This analysis, as Swamiji shows, is not quite accurate. The will is the third or fourth manifestation of nature.

Schopenhauer says that desire, or will, is the cause of everything. It is the will to exist that makes us manifest, but we deny this. The will is identical with the motor nerves. When I see an object there is no will; when its sensations are carried to the brain, there comes the reaction, which says 'Do this', or 'Do not do this', and this state of the ego-substance is what is called will. There cannot be a single particle of will which is not a reaction. So many things precede will. It is only a manufactured something out of the ego, and the ego is a manufacture of something still higher—the intelligence—and that again is a modification of the indiscrete nature.<sup>17</sup>

Swamiji has analysed the concepts of Purusha and Prakriti in Sankhya philosophy. Prakriti is undifferentiated, indiscrete. It gets transformed into *mahat*, universal mind, then into *asmita*, universal egoism. This finally generates the gross universe, which we perceive through the sense

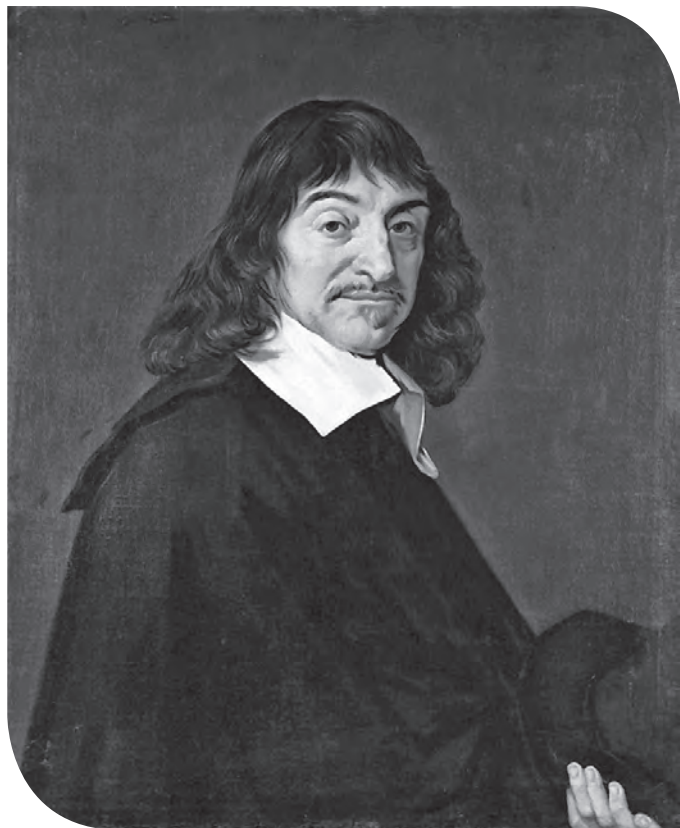
organs. These organs combine to form the body. Will is only a small part of the force that moves the body. The prime cause is the Purusha, which is neither *mahat* nor will but the cause of these. Advaita Vedanta goes further and comes up with the concept of the Self, Satchidananda. That which knows all things and is known by none is Brahman, not will. Brahman is the eternal perceiver or witness. The reality behind the body is the eternal Atman, which is unaffected by the motions and changes of the body. It is beyond will and idea. It is indestructible. The body-mind system of the single individual may disintegrate through death, but the soul continues its eternal cycle.

To sum up, Schopenhauer's contention that the world is made of two halves, will and idea, is inconsistent with Sankhya and Vedanta philosophy. Further, it does not explain what Schopenhauer calls the world as comprehensively as the Sankhya and Vedantic concepts discussed by Swamiji.

### ***Satchidananda and Descartes's cogito ergo sum***

Another concept, if it can be so-called, is the Vedantic idea of Satchidananda as compared to the Cartesian '*cogito ergo sum*; I think therefore I am'. Descartes is widely considered the founder of modern philosophy. He studied at La Fleche, an institution run by Jesuits. There is an amusing incident—though it is more legend than fact—that occurred towards the end of Descartes's life. Queen Christina of Sweden asked Descartes to come to Stockholm and give her lessons in philosophy and mathematics at 5 a.m. in the morning. Descartes had always suffered from a weak chest and needed long sleep. He often worked sitting near a big stove to stay warm. Stockholm was cold. He sat near a large stove and gave his lessons. From this vantage point, it was clear to





René Descartes (1596–1650); portrait by Rans Hals

him that he existed and was thinking, but he could not feel anything close to bliss! This may account for the fact that the concept of bliss is missing from his *cogito*! Sadly, five months after going to Sweden, he was dead. Descartes died of fever on 11 February 1650. It must be mentioned that he had come up with his *cogito* long before he went to Sweden.

The Cartesian method of enquiry is like the Vedantic '*neti, neti*; not this, not this'. Descartes bases his ideas on the certainty of reason. He rejects anything that his intellect cannot grasp with absolute certainty and clarity. The unclear and mysterious are untrue.<sup>18</sup> Dr Radhakrishnan evokes the figure of Rodin's thinker (42). This is a perfect metaphor for a philosopher who took thought as the primary datum. Descartes's *cogito* is expressed as the Latin *cogito ergo sum* or the French *je pense, donc je suis*. He sees himself as

a seeker of truth who must doubt everything until he is faced with irreducible, hard facts. Descartes conjures up a *malin genie*, an evil and cunning deceiver who might trick him about everything including his body, hands, feet, and other organs. His body may be a delusion. However, the very act of doubting is a proof of existence. If I can doubt, I exist.

In many places it is sheer joy to read Descartes. The line of argument, grossly simplified, is as follows:

(i) An intuitive, subjective affirmation of 'I'. The act of doubting presupposes the 'I' that doubts. I am looking at you. You may be a mirage, a figment of my imagination, but the 'I' is certain. It is a given and does not need to be proved. The first principle of the *cogito* is the primitive, empirical certainty of the 'I'. This 'I' is taken as a given. It is not proved.

(ii) An affirmation of existence—'I exist'. Even when I am in a dream state or in an imaginary world, it is the 'I' who is dreaming or the 'I' who is delusional. These are proofs of my existence.

(iii) An affirmation of my existence now, not yesterday or tomorrow. As Bertrand Russell puts it, by the time I say 'I exist', I may be relying on memory and may be deceived.<sup>19</sup>

(iv) Thought is the basic datum of existence. It is because I can doubt, imagine, or suffer from delusions that I know I exist, because these are all examples of thought. There are two basic elements: existence and thought. I am the primal thinking substance. My thoughts are the essence of my mind—*cogito ergo sum*. 'The I that has been proved to exist has been inferred from the fact that I think, therefore I exist while I think, and only then. If I ceased to think, there would be no evidence of my existence. I am a thing that

thinks, a substance of which the whole nature or essence consists in thinking, and which needs no place or material thing for its existence.’<sup>20</sup>

The obvious corollary is that when thought ceases, I cease to exist. Thinking is used by Descartes in a wide sense, which includes will, understanding, imagination, and feeling. The ideal truth is mathematics, because it is universally valid.<sup>21</sup> Descartes’s ideas are consistent with Acharya Shankara, to some extent. Shankara holds that knowledge presupposes the knower, who is constant, while the known is ephemeral (87). There is a critical difference, in the sense that for Shankara: ‘Man can abstract from his body and flesh, from his feelings and desires, even from thoughts which rise like waves on the surface of his mind, and reach a pure awareness, the naked condition of his pure selfhood’ (28).

The individual experiences ‘intuitive identification’ with the *svasiddha*, Divine Being, the core of reality. Thus, for Shankara ‘I think therefore I am’ is not valid. For him, I exist even when I go beyond thought! In fact, my entire spiritual journey is an attempt to reach a state of awareness beyond thought:

It is the intuition of our true selfhood, which is neither a prisoner in the body nor a captive in the cage of passing thoughts and fleeting passions, but a free universal spirit. These memorable moments of our life reveal to us the truth that we are, though we soon lapse from them into the familiar life of body, sense, and mind; and yet these moments of our divine existence continue to guide us the rest of our life as ‘pillars of cloud by day, pillars of fire by night’ (129).

The Upanishads speak repeatedly of Satchidananda. According to Swamiji, the *sat* or esse or being is the root idea of the Vedas.<sup>22</sup> *Sat* is the ‘creating principle’ or infinite existence; *Chit* is the ‘guiding principle’ or knowledge infinite;

and *ananda* is ‘the realizing principle’ or infinite bliss (8.11). These are attributes of Brahman. As we have seen, this is the internal thing-in-itself.

Descartes’s *cogito* is an incomplete expression of reality. Creation has its roots in bliss. Without bliss, existence would become impossible. We have then two sides of the triangle; the third is missing. The Vedantic conception of Satchidananda, on the other hand, embraces the whole of reality as we experience it:

The Vedānta describes Brahman, the ultimate Reality, as *Sat-Chit-Ānanda*, Existence-Knowledge-Bliss. If bliss is a constituent of the ultimate reality of the universe, it becomes a constituent of the universe as well. As expressed by the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (2.7) ... ‘He (Brahman) is verily delight. By obtaining this delight, man verily becomes blissful. Who indeed would breathe, who live, if in the space (of the heart) this bliss were not there? Indeed, it is He alone that is the source of bliss.’<sup>23</sup>

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* discusses the nature of man, through a thorough-going study of his individuality, which it analyses into five *kośas* or sheaths—the material, the vital, the psychological, the intellectual, and the intuitive—in the innermost core of which it finds the real Self of man, the Ātman, ever pure, ever free, and of the nature of *Sat-Chit-Ānanda* (51).

Here we have another critical element: the idea that this Satchidananda is the real essence of man: “I am neither the body, nor the organs, nor am I the mind; I am Existence, Knowledge, and Bliss absolute; I am He.” ... Where is knowledge for me, for I am knowledge itself. Where is life for me, for I am life itself!’<sup>24</sup>

All I ask is that Indian scholars read Vedic texts in conjunction with the ideas of Western thinkers. They will soon see the sweep and depth of the former. This is a rational, scientific, self-evident, verifiable fact.

## Conclusion


I have made a modest attempt to present parallel lines of thought in Vedanta and Western philosophy. The ideas I have mentioned are not even the tip of the iceberg. For instance, Swamiji's conception of the leader as someone who serves his followers is radically opposed to the Nietzschean idea of the superman. There are many such examples. Further, in many instances Indian concepts are older and far more complete and comprehensive than the corresponding Western

**I**f we look at a picture through a pin-hole in a cardboard, we get an utterly mistaken notion; yet what we see is really the picture. As we enlarge the hole, we get a clearer and clearer idea. Out of the reality we manufacture the different views in conformity with our mistaken perceptions of name and form. When we throw away the cardboard, we see the same picture, but we see it as it is. We put in all the attributes, all the errors; the picture itself is unaltered thereby. That is because Atman is the reality of all; all we see is Atman, but not as we see it, as name and form; they are all in our veil, in Maya.

They are like spots in the object-glass of a telescope, yet it is the light of the sun that shows us the spots; we could not even see the illusion save for the background of reality which is Brahman. Swami Vivekananda is just the speck on the object-glass; I am Atman, real, unchangeable, and that reality alone enables me to see Swami Vivekananda. Atman is the essence of every hallucination; but the sun is never identified with the spots on the glass, it only shows them to us. Our actions, as they are evil or good, increase or decrease the 'spots'; but they never affect the God within us. Perfectly cleanse the mind of spots and instantly we see, 'I and my father are one'.

—*The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*, 7.75

ideas. Speaking of Sankhya philosophy Swamiji says: 'Wherever there is any philosophy or rational thought, it owes something or other to Kapila. Pythagoras learnt it in India, and taught it in Greece. Later on Plato got an inkling of it; and still later the Gnostics carried the thought to Alexandria, and from there it came to Europe. So wherever there is any attempt at psychology or philosophy, the great father of it is this man, Kapila' (2.455).

I have tried to substantiate my opening argument that the syllabus in Indian schools and colleges needs to be India-centric. We need a stronger foundation of India's own ideas and a greater understanding and appreciation of them. I have been severely limited by my own area of study. Swami Vivekananda's conceptualization of key concepts in the history of ideas has universal relevance and can be used as a starting point for new research paradigms. 

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# Vivekananda and His Seafaring Vessels

**Somenath Mukherjee**

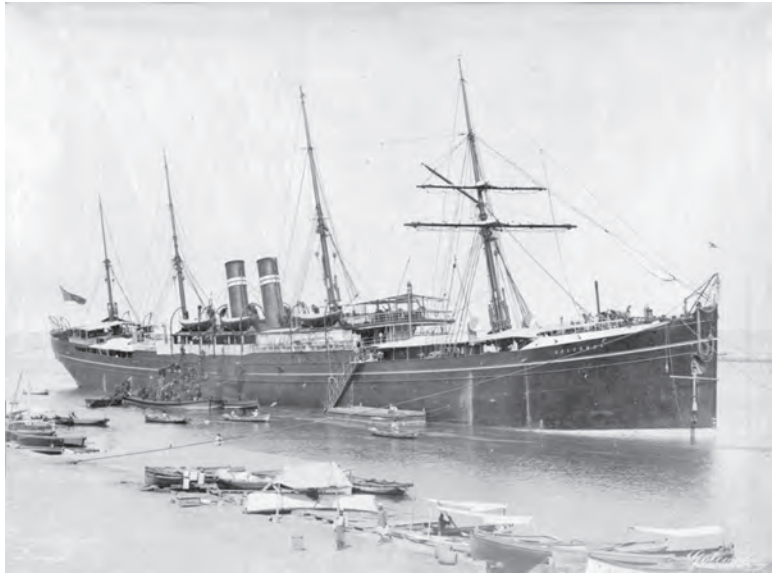
*(Continued from the previous issue)*

## **SS Golconda**

**T**HE *GOLCONDA* BELONGED to the British India Steam Navigation Company (BISN). Among the Company's fleets, she was reportedly the remarkable one. The history of the BISN<sup>62</sup> has a unique significance on account of its link to India. Though the saga is a long one, replete with irresistible anecdotes, we shall pick out a few to suit our purpose.

The Scottish contribution played a great role in shaping the expanding British Empire's commercial and civil infrastructure. Behind the inception of the BISN, later largely known as BI, stood two Scots: William Mackinnon and Robert Mackenzie, who went into the partnership of Mackinnon, Mackenzie & Co. in December 1847. Shipping was one of their interests, and initially it concerned chartered sailing vessels running between India and Australia.

By 1890 there was an increasing need for an adequate and timely transport of some twenty-two million pieces of mail that went every year from Britain to every corner of its empire. It is said that during those days ensuring safe and speedy movement of mail became a Victorian obsession. This inspired steamship companies to look for a coveted Royal Mail contract. To enter into the lucrative business of transporting mail between Calcutta and Rangoon regularly, the Calcutta Burmah Steam Navigation Company



**SS Golconda**

was registered in Glasgow on 24 September 1856. This was the genesis of the British India Steam Navigation Company. Success and further prospects followed, and the new BI Company was registered in Scotland on 28 October 1862, with Robert Mackenzie as the managing agent. It is also of great interest that this managing agency had long presided over the fortunes of their great fleets from the towering office building at Strand Road, Calcutta. In 1894 the fleet of the BI included 88 vessels, some of them running up to 5,000 tons gross, or even more in a few cases. Among the many routes in which the vessels of the company ran, the London-Marseilles-Port Said-Suez-Aden-Colombo-Madras-Calcutta was one. On the reverse route the *Golconda* once took Swami Vivekananda aboard on his second visit to the West. It is also a very curious coincidence that in 1914, slightly more than a decade after the swami left this earth, two shipping companies, the P & O and the British Indian Steam

Navigation, had merged their business interests. We know that Vivekananda went to the West for the first time on a ship of the former company, while on the second occasion he chose a ship of the latter company. In 1972 the BI was entirely absorbed into the P & O.

Having given a short sketch of the company we may now look forward to an assuredly interesting profile of the *Golconda*.<sup>63</sup> We have seen earlier that the *Golconda* was remarkable among the ships of the BI, but, at the outset, she was built on speculation when the yards of the Doxfords of Sunderland had some spare capacity, in the mid 1880s. The ship was designed as a double-deck whale-backed steamer with two funnels with a barquentine rig on four masts. The newly built ship was registered having 6,037 gross tonnage (3,960 net), measuring 422 and 48 feet respectively in length and beam. On trial her engine could achieve a speed of 13.9 knots, though her weak point lay in her limited accommodation—she could carry no more than 80 in her first class and 28 in her second class. This feature posed a serious obstacle in attracting a prospective buyer. In the beginning the Doxfords had the Guion Line in mind as the prospective buyer but, apart from them, no other buyer had shown any interest in the new ship. Finally, an offer was made to the Canadian Pacific, which had recently started its new Vancouver-Hong Kong service. The negotiations carried on in a highly positive manner and the ship was launched on 8 February 1887, christened as *Transpacific*. But the Canadian Pacific ultimately did not buy her. The ship was reportedly acquired by a Hull owner who renamed her *Nulli Secundus*. All this happened much before the ship reached her finished stage. In August 1887, when the BISN came to learn of her, it made an offer that was accepted. In December 1887 the ship was finally completed as *Golconda* [II].<sup>64</sup>

Thus, the *Golconda* joined the BI fleet and began her service on their main London-Calcutta route. Her successful role as BI's flagship continued for twelve years, save for a brief government charter when she was used for transport during the Boer war—October 1899 to May 1902. When the *Golconda* resumed civilian duties, her look and limited speed were beginning to be considered obsolete. Therefore, in March 1913 she was deployed to the East African service; and a couple of years later, in 1915, the *Golconda* was requisitioned as an Indian Army transport. Lastly, after several return voyages to Europe and while en route to London from Middlesbrough, the *Golconda* was blown up at Aldeburgh on 3 June 1916, with the loss of 19 crews. According to records, the *Golconda* was torpedoed without warning and sunk by a submarine on 3 June 1916, 5 miles SE by E from Aldeburgh, with the loss of 19 lives.<sup>65</sup>

### **The Journey**

This was a significant voyage, for destiny had kept no more than three earthly years for Swamiji, and his work in western America, spanning a mere six months, was of a high spiritual calibre. Highlighting her fortune of having had the uninterrupted company of Vivekananda aboard the ship, Nivedita wrote: 'From the beginning of the voyage to the end, the flow of thought and story went on. One never knew what moment would see the flash of intuition, and hear the ringing utterance of some fresh truth. It was while we sat chatting in the River on the first afternoon, that he suddenly exclaimed, "Yes! The older I grow, the more everything seems to me to lie in manliness. This is my new gospel. Do even evil like a man! Be wicked, if you must, on a great scale!"'<sup>66</sup> Nivedita concluded by adding: 'Our Master has come and he has gone, and in the priceless memory he has left with us who knew

him, there is no other thing so great, as this his love of man' (ibid.).

Adding to her inestimable contribution to Vivekananda's history, Nivedita came out with another of her unmatched experiences aboard the *Golconda*: 'It was dark when we approached Sicily, and against the sunset sky, Etna was in slight eruption. As we entered the straits of Messina, the moon rose, and I walked up and down the deck beside the Swami, while he dwelt on the fact that beauty is not external, but already in the mind. On one side frowned the dark crags of the Italian coast, on the other, the island was touched with silver light. "Messina must thank *me*!" he said. "It is I who give her all her beauty!"' (152).

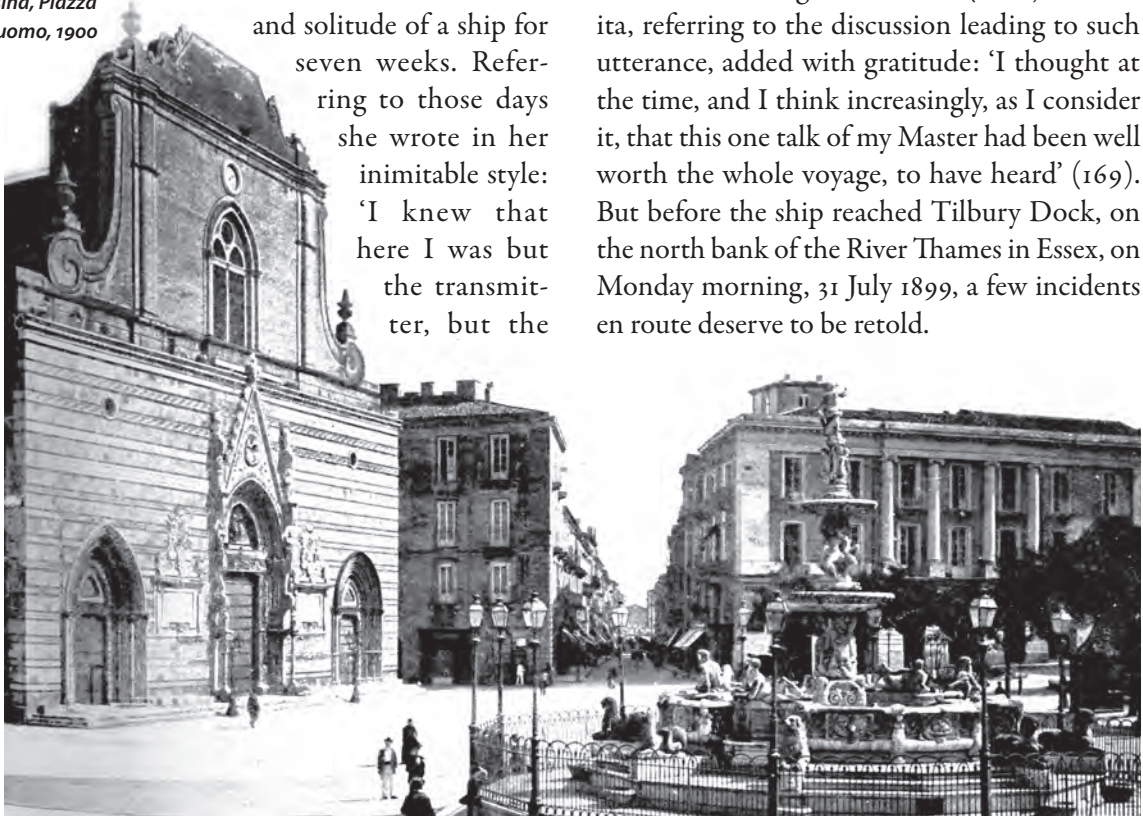
Nivedita was more than aware of her immense responsibility of accompanying Swamiji in the exclusive confinement and solitude of a ship for seven weeks. Referring to those days she wrote in her inimitable style: 'I knew that here I was but the transmitter, but the

bridge, between him and that countless host of his own people, who would yet arise, and seek to make good his dreams' (166). Undeniably these words still carry the spirit of its purpose, for they were written by one who gave her life in striving to 'make good his dreams'.

One day during the voyage, while answering Nivedita's query about Sri Ramakrishna, Swamiji said: 'He is the method, that wonderful unconscious method! He did not understand himself. He knew nothing of England or English, save that they were queer folk from over the sea. But he lived that great life—and I read the meaning' (168).

Similarly, on another occasion, while dwelling on Indian religion and its typical trends, Vivekananda laid down the essence of his plan for the country: 'The strength must come to the nation through education' (ibid.). Nivedita, referring to the discussion leading to such utterance, added with gratitude: 'I thought at the time, and I think increasingly, as I consider it, that this one talk of my Master had been well worth the whole voyage, to have heard' (169). But before the ship reached Tilbury Dock, on the north bank of the River Thames in Essex, on Monday morning, 31 July 1899, a few incidents en route deserve to be retold.

Messina, Piazza  
Duomo, 1900





The *Golconda*, after sailing the rough waters of the Bay of Bengal for more than two days and nights, reached Madras port on 24 June. The *Hindu* had reported the incident:

On Sunday morning the pier was crowded with an eager throng of spectators anxious to see the Swami Vivekananda, who was on his way to England by the S.S. *Golconda*. But to their disappointment they were told that the vessel having arrived from Calcutta, an [plague] infected port, was under quarantine, and that the Swami would not be allowed to land. The numerous people who had gathered together, of all ranks and ages, had therefore to go away considerably vexed.

Some there were who determined to have a glimpse at least of the Swami, and with that view they went in boats alongside the vessel, from whose deck the Swami was accorded a distant but cheerful welcome by his friends and admirers. Some days before, a public meeting was held in Castle Kernan under the presidency of Hon'ble Mr. P. Ananda Charlu, at which it was resolved to address Government praying that the Swami Vivekananda be permitted to land at Madras, and stop there for a few hours before embarking again. Message after message was despatched to the Blue Heights, but the Swami's friends and admirers got only some vague replies, but no sanction was wired to the Port Health Officer and the result was that the Health Officer could not allow him to land.<sup>67</sup>

Alasinga Perumal, the ardent disciple of the Swami, had meanwhile purchased a ticket on the *Golconda* to accompany him from Madras to Colombo. Apart from his overriding desire to meet his guru, Alasinga had other important business with Swamiji, who later wrote in his memoirs:

Ramakrishnananda and Nirbhayananda made some trips near to the ship. They insisted on staying on the boat the whole day in the hot sun,

and I had to remonstrate with them, when they gave up the idea. And as the news of my not being permitted to land got abroad, the crowd of boats began to increase still more. I, too, began to feel exhaustion from leaning against the railings too long. Then I bade farewell to my Madras friends and entered my cabin. Alasinga got no opportunity to consult me about the *Brahmavadin* [a magazine] and the Madras work; so he was going to accompany me to Colombo. The ship left the harbour in the evening, when I heard a great shout, and peeping through the cabin-window, I found that about a thousand men, women, and children of Madras, who had been sitting on the harbour-walls, gave this farewell shout when the ship started. On a joyous occasion the people of Madras also, like the Bengalis, make the peculiar sound with the tongue known as the *Hulu*.<sup>68</sup>

Sailing uninterrupted for three days and two nights the *Golconda* reached Colombo on the morning of Wednesday, 28 June. Swamiji writes in his memoirs:

Our Colombo friends had procured a permit for our landing, so we landed and met our friends there. Sir [actually Hon'ble Mr P] Coomara Swamy is the foremost man among the Hindus: his wife is an English lady and his son is barefooted and wears the sacred ashes on his forehead. Mr. Arunachalam and other friends came to meet me. After a long time I partook of Mulagutanni and the king-cocanut. They put some green cocoanuts into my cabin. I met Mrs. Higgins and visited her boarding school for Buddhist girls. I also visited the monastery and school of our old acquaintance, the Countess of Canovara (7.339).

The *Golconda* left Colombo on the evening of the same day it arrived, and on her way withstood the onslaught of an unusually rough monsoon. The swami writes:

The more our ship is advancing, the more is the storm increasing, and the louder is the wind howling—there is incessant rain, and enveloping darkness; huge waves are dashing on the ship's deck with a terrible noise, so that it is impossible to stay on the deck. The dining table has been divided into small squares by means of wood partitions, placed lengthwise and breadthwise, called fiddle, out of which the food articles are jumping up. The ship is creaking, as if it were going to break to pieces. ...

Near the island of Socotra [a little over 450 miles east of Aden], the monsoon was at its worst. The Captain remarked that this was the centre of the monsoon, and that if we could pass this, we should gradually reach calmer waters. And so we did. And this nightmare also ended (7:340–3).

The ship thus took ten days, instead of the usual six, to cover the distance from Colombo to Aden, where it reached on the evening of 8 July. But at Aden no passenger was allowed ashore nor any cargo allowed into the ship. In spite of the hazardous weather Vivekananda's health had improved during the voyage. On 14 July he wrote to Christine Greenstidel: 'I was so, so bad in health in India. My heart went wrong all the way—what with mountain climbing, bathing in glacier water and nervous prostration! I used to get terrible fits [of asthma]—the last lasting about seven days and nights. All the time I was suffocating and had to stand up. This trip has almost made a new man of me. I feel much better and, if this continues, hope to be quite strong before I reach America' (9:116–17). But he was not aware, till a telegram reached him at Marseilles, that both Christine Greenstidel and Mary C Funke, two of his ardent disciples from Detroit, would await him at the London port.

It took the *Golconda* forty-two days to reach the Tilbury dock in London, at 6 in the

morning of Monday, 31 July. On 3 August 1899 Nivedita wrote to Josephine Macleod: 'We arrived on Monday morning, met at unearthly hours by mother, Nim [Nivedita's younger sister May, whose imminent marriage would keep her a few more days in London], Miss Paston, and the two American ladies Mrs. Funke and Miss Greenstidel.'<sup>69</sup>

### **The Interlude**

In fact, those two American disciples came all the way from Detroit to meet their beloved swami. Explaining their efforts Mary Funke wrote afterwards: 'We had seen in an Indian magazine a notice that he would sail on a certain date, and we hastened over to the other side to meet him, as we were very much alarmed at the reports we had heard regarding his health.'<sup>70</sup> But whatever pains were taken by the two disciples to reach the Tilbury Dock at that 'unearthly hours' on that day, it was rewarded beyond limit when they accompanied Vivekananda on his voyage to America within little over a fortnight.

Swamiji's stay in London was shortened mainly for two reasons. First was his original plan, as is well narrated in what he wrote to E T Sturdy on 14 July 1899 from Port Said:

I shall not have many friends staying now in London, and Miss MacLeod is so desirous I should come [to America]. A stay in England under these circumstances is not advisable. Moreover, I do not have much life left. At least I must go on with that supposition. I mean, if anything has to be done in America, it is high time we bring our scattered influence in America to a head—if not organise regularly. Then I shall be free to return to England in a few months and work with a will till I return to India.<sup>71</sup>

The second reason, becoming more

important within a few days of reaching England, was his deteriorating health. On seeing the swami at the Dock, Mary Funke later wrote: 'He had grown very slim, and looked and acted like a boy. He was so happy to find the voyage had brought back some of the old strength and vigour.'<sup>72</sup> But such apparent improvement did hardly last, and we find Nivedita writing to Josephine on 12 August: 'The king is this morning far from well. He went to see Miss Soutter yesterday, and came home late—but he panted so hard that it took half hour from the station to his rooms—a walk of 4 to 5 minutes. ... I dread this heavy climate for him.'<sup>73</sup>

Concurrent to Swamiji's assurance to E T Sturdy to 'return to England in a few months and work with a will', a report in the *Prabuddha Bharata* of October 1899 on his departure from England on 16 August also confirms such initial plan: 'The Swami returning shortly to England to do some work, if not incapacitated by indisposition.'<sup>74</sup> But such work in England remained unfulfilled, perhaps for what he experienced on arriving in London and, more so, for the shape his future work took. Despite the apparent apathy of his erstwhile admirers in London, he still appeared to have considered giving a boost to his London work later. 'A few weeks' before leaving London he wrote to Mary Halboister—nee Hale—'I expect to be in New York in a few weeks, and don't know what next. I hope to come back to England next spring.'<sup>75</sup> But Providence had designed it otherwise; 'the next spring' saw him scattering the message of Vedanta in California.

On 12 August 1899 Nivedita wrote to Josephine Macleod: 'Swami Starts for New York from Glasgow by Allan Line on Thursday the 17th next—and that he wishes me to follow him as quickly as I possibly can, after Nim's wedding—Sept. 6th. ... He goes on to you. He says

he will shut himself up in a room and live on fruit and milk and get well.'<sup>76</sup>

(To be concluded)

## Notes and References

62. Available at <<http://www.bishop.com/images/100years/BIHundredYears.pdf>>; <<http://www.bishop.com/index.htm>>; <<http://www.merchantnavyofficers.com/bi-start.html>>; <<http://www.merchantnavyofficers.com/bistart.html>>; <<http://www.rakaia.co.uk/downloads/british-india-history.pdf>> accessed 27 March 2011.
63. Information on the *Golconda* has been taken mainly from: <<http://www.christies.com/LotFinder/LotDetailsPrintable.aspx?intObjectID=4707323>> and <<http://www.alfakom.se/specks/golconda.htm>> accessed 12 January 2012.
64. The *Golconda* I was built in 1863 and belonged to the Peninsula & Oriental Steam Navigation Co. On 29 August 1863 she sailed on her maiden voyage from Southampton to Calcutta. She was eventually sold in Bombay on 17 May 1881 to B Mohamed Habdue Rayman for 5,311 pounds—see <<http://www.theshipslist.com/ships/descriptions/ShipsG.html>> accessed 12 January 2012.
65. See <<http://www.naval-history.net/WWILossesBrMS1914-16.htm>> accessed 12 January 2012.
66. *The Master As I Saw Him*, 144–5.
67. *The Life of Swami Vivekananda*, 2.459.
68. *Complete Works*, 7.332.
69. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, ed. Sankari Prasad Basu, 2 vols (Calcutta: Nababharata, 1982), 1.190.
70. Mary C Funke, 'The Master', in Swami Vivekananda, *Inspired Talks* (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1945), 30.
71. *Complete Works*, 8.464.
72. 'The Master', 30.
73. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, 1.195.
74. *Vivekananda in Indian Newspapers (1893–1902)*, 626.
75. *Complete Works*, 8.466.
76. *Letters of Sister Nivedita*, 197.



# Svarajya Siddhih: Attaining Self-dominion

Gangadharendra Saraswati

(Continued from the previous issue)



## Is Ajñāna Abhāva?

THE METHOD OF *PRATYAKṢA*, perception, leads to the universal, clear, and unambiguous cognition of ignorance, such as 'I am ignorant; I do not know me properly; I do not know Brahman'. However, this is not the *sāmānya-abhāva*, general absence, of knowledge, *jñāna*. In Indian logic, in the relation of *saṁyoga* or contact between two entities, one entity is a *pratiyogi*, adjunct, the superstratum; the other is an *anuyogi*, subjunct, or the substratum. When you see a pot on the floor, the pot is the *pratiyogi* and the floor is the *anuyogi*. In the case of fire and smoke, smoke is the *pratiyogi* and fire is the *anuyogi*. In the case of a fire on a mountain, fire is the *pratiyogi* and the mountain is the *anuyogi*. However, in Indian logic, *abhāva* or absence is recognized as a positive cognition. For example, when we say, 'there is no pot on the floor', there is a cognition opposite to that of 'there is a pot on the floor'. The latter is a positive cognition and the former is a negative cognition. Therefore, *abhāva*, non-existence, or absence is a real fact. However, the cognition of non-existence or absence requires previous knowledge of the entity that is absent. How do I know that the pot is not on the floor

if I have not seen any pot earlier? The entity of which *abhāva* is cognized is called *pratiyogi* or the counter-positive. In the case of the absence of the pot on the floor, the pot is the *pratiyogi* and the ground is the *anuyogi* or *dharmi*. In the case of an empty water tank, water is the *pratiyogi* and the tank is the *dharmi*.

*Ajñāna*, ignorance, is not a general absence of *jñāna*, because cognition of the absence of *jñāna* will require that *jñāna* be the *pratiyogi* or that there be the previous knowledge of *jñāna*, which is absurd. So, because of the absence of the *dharmi-pratiyogi* correlation, the general absence of knowledge is not proved. Moreover, the cognition of ignorance of knowledge is exhibited in statements like 'me' and 'mine' and there cannot be a general absence of such knowledge that is not known before. The relation between ignorance and knowledge is not like the relation between an empty water tank and water. Because knowledge does not occur in ignorance, the relation is not of a superstratum and substratum. In the case of absence in a substratum other than where the object in question is generally found, the counter-positive has a distinguishing characteristic. For

example, when one says ‘the cloth does not exist in the jar’, the existence of the cloth is denied, and so it is the counter-positive. A jar is a different substratum than the cloth and hence the property of jar—jar-hood—is the distinguishing characteristic, *avacchedaka*, of the counter-positive-ness of this *abhāva*, non-existence, of the jar in the cloth. Similarly, when a cake is absent in a pudding, the cake-ness is the distinguishing characteristic of the counter-positive-ness of this absence. This kind of absence is called *avacchinna-pratīyogitā-abhāva*, non-existence with a counter-positive-ness distinguished by a characteristic. Ignorance is not a non-existence with a counter-positive-ness distinguished by the characteristics of certitude of Atman, valid knowledge, Self-realization, and the like, because these experiences occur in the same substratum or person where ignorance occurs. Also, the cognition ‘I do not know Brahman’ is always present in the person who is ignorant.

Ignorance is also not *prāgabhāva*, previous non-existence, because such a previous non-existence is not admitted here. Even if it were to be admitted, there is no counter-positive and there is no concurrence of the counter-positive. Further, none will admit the counter-positive-ness distinguished by the general characteristic of knowledge in this previous non-existence. Previous non-existence of ignorance cannot be admitted because ignorance is beginningless. Ignorance is also not *atyantābhāva*, absolute non-existence, because it is destroyed at the dawn of knowledge, as taught in the Bhagavadgita: ‘But those whose ignorance is destroyed by the knowledge [of the Self],’<sup>16</sup> and ‘Destroyed is my delusion and I have gained my memory’ (18.73). Ignorance is a positive entity, which is the root of all duality and which obscures the reality and distracts one from it.

### Types of Renunciation

All actions have to be given up following the procedure mentioned in the scriptures, and the aspirant has to humbly approach the guru. The guru should be a person who has realized Brahman, has renounced the world, and is the best teacher among mendicants. He should be capable of removing the ignorance of the disciple by teaching him the essence of Vedānta. The lotus-feet of such a guru should be saluted and he should be served by word, mind, and actions to attain the knowledge of Brahman through spiritual practices like hearing, cogitating, and meditating on the teachings of the Vedānta.

Objection: It is not proper to renounce actions as the scriptures prohibit the giving up of actions, both *nitya* and *naimittika*, through statements like, ‘by doing karma, indeed, should one wish to live here for a hundred years,’<sup>17</sup> and, ‘having offered the desirable wealth to the teacher, do not cut off the line of progeny.’<sup>18</sup>

Reply: Without *sannyasa* or renunciation you cannot do spiritual practices like hearing, cogitating, and meditating, and hence *sannyasa* is necessary. Persons belonging to the other stages of life like Brahmacharya, Grihastha, and Vanaprastha can do these spiritual practices only when not performing actions.

Objection: It was while being engaged as very active householders that persons such as Janaka, Yajñavalkya, and Ajatashatru performed these practices and became established in Brahman. And so, it is quite possible to attain the knowledge of Brahman being engaged in actions, there is no need for renunciation.

Reply: This is not so. The Shruti presents three stages of life or ashramas, ‘there are three divisions of virtue,’<sup>19</sup> and says that ‘all these become the attainers of the virtuous worlds; the man established in Brahman attains immortality’

(ibid.). Thus, persons belonging to the three ashramas other than the Sannyasa ashrama only can attain the virtuous worlds. The term 'established in Brahman' by meaning clearly indicates that only monks attain immortality.

Objection: How can the term 'established in Brahman' point only to monks as that is not the derivative meaning?

Reply: Here the conventional meaning should be taken into account and not the derivative meaning. The term 'established in Brahman' denotes a total absorption in Brahman and absence of other activities. This is not possible for persons belonging to the other three stages or ashramas because the Shruti or the Vedas speak of sin being incurred on the non-performance of the duties enjoined upon one's stage of life. However, the monk has renounced all actions according to the procedure prescribed by the Vedas and hence incurs no sin on non-performance of actions. Being steadfast in Brahman through spiritual practices like the restraint of the mind, the restraint of sense organs, is the appropriate duty of a monk.<sup>20</sup> So has it been said: 'In meditation of the Vedantic truth one should pass one's time till the approach of sleep and so on till death; never should one allow the least quarter to sensuous desires in the mind.'<sup>21</sup> This establishes that the term 'established in Brahman' refers only to a monk. Also, the possibility of persons belonging to the other stages of life being constantly engaged in spiritual practices is quashed. Persons in these stages of life can perform spiritual practices and realize Brahman. The narrative of the scriptures gives only an indication towards the possibility of these persons attaining knowledge, but their right to knowledge cannot go against the injunctions of the Vedas to perform their duties of various actions like sacrifices. If it were not so, the indication in the statement,

'the sacrifice is taking place in the cows' would imply that cows have a right to perform sacrifices instead of the intended meaning of the sentence that the sacrifice is taking place in the cowshed.

(To be continued)

## References

- 16 Bhagavadgita, 5.16.
17. *Isha Upanishad*, 2.
18. *Taittiriya Upanishad*, 1.11.1.
19. *Chhandogya Upanishad*, 2.23.1.
20. For a similar discussion see Shankaracharya's commentary on the *Brahma Sutra* 3.4, 18–20.
21. Quoted in *Laghu Vākya Vṛtti* (Calcutta: Advaita Ashrama, 1998), 35–6. Also see *Siddhantaresha Sangraha*, 1.14.

**T**he attainment of the Absolute is called the Knowledge of Brahman. But it is extremely difficult to acquire. A man cannot acquire the Knowledge of Brahman unless he completely rids himself of his attachment to the world. When the Divine Mother was born as the daughter of King Himalaya, She showed Her various forms to Her father. The king said, 'I want to see Brahman.' Thereupon the Divine Mother said: 'Father, if that is your desire, then you must seek the company of holy men. You must go into solitude, away from the world, and now and then live in holy company.'

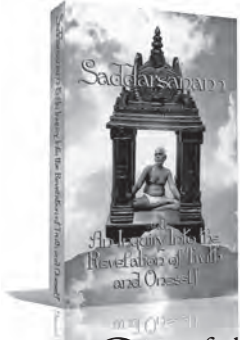
The manifold has come from the One alone, the Relative from the Absolute. There is a state of consciousness where the many disappears, and the One, as well; for the many must exist as long as the One exists. Brahman is without comparison. It is impossible to explain Brahman by analogy. It is between light and darkness. It is Light, but not the light that we perceive, not material light.

—The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna, 307



# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications



## ***Saddarsanam and An Inquiry into the Revelation of Truth and Oneself***

Nome

Society of Abidance in Truth, 1834  
Ocean Street, Santa Cruz, California 95060. Website: [www.satramana.org](http://www.satramana.org). 2009. xvi + 332 pp. Price not mentioned.

One of the seminal works in the Ramana Maharishi canon, the Tamil composition *Ulladu Narpadu* (Forty [verses] on What Is), was translated into Sanskrit by Vashishtha Ganapati Muni. Commenting upon Ganapati Muni's version is not an easy task, as one has to deal with abstractions set in granite Sanskrit. The brilliant scholar T V Kapali Sastri's commentary was the first to tackle the seemingly opaque verses.

Nome, while undertaking the present translation of the work, does not term it a formal exegesis. His attempt to follow the original order of the Sanskrit words closely in English is commendable, though it makes it difficult for the ordinary reader to hold on to the arguments. Here is his version of the tenth verse:

How can knowledge shine  
if there is not ignorance?  
Without knowledge, does ignorance shine?  
And 'Whose are the two?' thus.  
Inquiring into the source (root),  
Abidance in one's own (true) nature is  
the Knowledge of the Supreme Truth.

One feels more comfortable with Kapali Sastri's version:

For perception of the truth,  
worship of the Supreme  
In name and form is meant indeed.

But the state of Being that  
in natural poise of Self,  
That alone is perception true.

But as Nome rightly points out, the literal version is presented 'to provide the meditating reader with the full scope of meanings consonant with an experiential understanding of this nondual Knowledge' (xi).

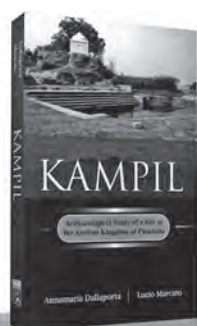
The commentary is pleasantly easy to follow and immensely helpful to the common reader. Such an *atma-vichara*, inquiry into the Self, is not an intellectual probe but the self's adventure to achieve knowledge that brings peace. Rather, it brings the self to Peace, which is the Paramatman, supreme Self. To explain this difficult text in English, which is singularly devoid of subtle philosophical variations in its diction, is quite a thorny undertaking. Nome has necessarily to take recourse to questions and interjections, and his patience and perseverance in bringing clear understanding to the reader is remarkable. For instance: 'The world exists nowhere but in your mind. So, where are you? If the world is in your mind, you cannot be in the world. Where are you? Any place and anything that appear in the world, which exist only in your mind, cannot be your abode. The limitations of the world exist only in the mind. Those limitations in space, time, and such, cannot be yours' (119). With repetitions and an occasional recourse to similes and images—gold and ornaments, mirage, seer of the Self, *mrityunjaya*, conqueror of death—Nome helps us cross many an inexplicable hurdle in the quest for *sat-darshana*, perception of Reality, to bring us immovable peace.

The crucial teaching of the text asks us to abide in the state of non-ego. This should be the natural state, and we have to arrive at it by negating our conceptions of the individual, the world, and the supreme Self. Nome's retreat proves that philosophical enquiry need not be held in funereal

seriousness: 'Real Knowledge is not the end result of a long thinking process. There is no engineering trick needed for Self-Realization.' A questioner says that it is reverse engineering, evoking laughter. Nome joins the rest in the hilarity and agrees: 'Yes, it is reversing the engineer so that he goes back to where he came from.' Reading *Saddarsanam* takes some time, but to gain freedom from the triple bondage of 'me', 'mine', and 'for me' does indeed take longer. The concluding words say it all with clinical precision: 'The individual does not become liberated; the individual does not become realized. Realization is Liberation from the individual, it is not liberation of the individual. Understand like this, and you will find this Liberation in yourself' (329).

Prema Nandakumar

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**Kampil: Archaeological Study of a Site in the Ancient Kingdom of Panchala**

Annamaria Dallaporta and Lucio Marcato

Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, PO Box 5715, 54 Rani Jhansi Road, New Delhi 110 055. Website: [www.mrnlbooks.com](http://www.mrnlbooks.com). 2011. x + 210 pp. ₹ 795.

The internationally renowned archaeologists, with years of quality work behind them, have been concentrating their attention on a nondescript site called Kampil in present-day district of Farrukhabad, Uttar Pradesh, and for a good reason. Kampil was the ancient southern capital of Panchala, located in the Ganga-Yamuna-Doab region, with Ahichchatra, now in the Bareilly district, as the northern capital. The site is ancient, but archaeological history also is long and it started with Arthur Cunningham who in the nineteenth century identified Kampil with ancient Kampilya. Though excavations were done and much data over the years collected, no systematic digging was undertaken in many potential ancient sites.

Given this limitation, the authors of the book under review have done a tremendous work and produced a veritable mine of information by

accessing climatological, anthropological, archaeological, and archaeobotanical data and parameters that could be used as the basis for future excavations. For instance, they show that the typology and quantity of pottery—from ochre pottery of mature Harappa to Northern Black Polished Ware—are variably distributed throughout the sites of Panchala, which reveals the social pattern of pottery usages in different time periods.

As this region exerted a major political influence on Indian culture and the names Panchala, Kampilya, and so forth are found scattered all over the ancient literature, the authors have taken into consideration texts such as Rig Veda, *Shatapatha Brahmana*, *Baudhayana Shrautasutra*, Puranas, Mahabharata, and Ramayana. Moreover, through texts such as *Samarangana Sutra*, *Vishvakarma Vastushastra*, *Brihat Samhita*, *Bhavishya Purana*, and *Jatakas*, has been inferred the town-village spatial measurement patterns. Textual references to the extravagant portrayal of towns and the dense and semi-dense Gangetic forests from the epics are interpreted in accordance with their opinion. The authors conclude that the welfare state of the *Arthashastra* juxtaposed with *gana sanghas*, non-monarchical type of political organizations of the sixth century BCE were traditionally autocratic. Drupad Kila, 6 km south-west of Kampil identified as the southern ancient Kampilya after the Mahabharata war, is one site following this tradition of endorsing totalitarianism under a religious garb.

Alternatively, a theory suggests that Panchala was actually a state stretching from the Himalayan foothills to the Chambal riverbed, which included at least some parts of Punjab. Even if the Mahabharata, in its final form, was completed in the fourth century CE, it recorded traditions that were much older. So, further industrious research is required to put the data on a firm basis.

On the whole, detailed studies of all facts and previous research make the book a profound study. Documentation of the Kampil museum, together with updated and clearly delineated diagrams, maps, sketches, pictures, and notes speak of the author's diligence and professionalism.

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# REPORTS

Youth programme  
at Bhubaneswar



## Commemoration of the 175th Birth Anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna

The following centres celebrated the 175th birth anniversary of Sri Ramakrishna. **Aurangabad:** public meeting on 18 February 2012; youth camp on 19 February, attended by about 500 students; and spiritual retreat on 19 March, in which 150 persons participated. **Delhi:** discourses on the Bhagavata from 12 to 18 March, attended by about 450 persons daily. **Hyderabad:** cultural programme on 24 February; 'Sri Ramakrishna Sahasranama Akshatarchana' (worshipping Sri Ramakrishna with saffron rice), attended by 500 devotees on 25 February; and spiritual retreat and 'Sri Ramakrishna Leela Ganam' (narration of Sri Ramakrishna's life with songs) on 26 February, in which about 500 and 1,000 devotees respectively took part. **Kanpur:** discourses and devotional singing from 11 to 14 March. **Malda:** meeting and cultural programmes on 24 and 25 March, attended by about 1,000 devotees. **Pune:** speeches and devotional singing from 23 to 26 February. **Salem:** speeches and drama at a local college on 11 March, attended by about 700 people. **Thiruvananthapuram:** cultural programme, discourses, and devotional singing on 26 February. **Vadodara:** a programme from 11 to 23 March comprising discourses, public meeting, spiritual retreat, devotional singing, and release of a commemorative volume. **Dinajpur,** in Bangladesh: interreligious meet, in which representatives of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, and Islam spoke.

## Commemoration of the 150th Birth Anniversary of Swami Vivekananda

Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, released on 26 March at Belur Math the Santali dialect version of the book *Bharat-Jagaraner Agradut Swami Vivekananda*, published by **Belur Math** on the occasion of Swami Vivekananda's 150th birth anniversary.

The following centres organized various programmes to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary. **Bhubaneswar:** district-level youth conventions on 14 and 29 January and 26 February; value education programmes in 48 schools and 6 colleges in 9 districts of Odisha, attended by about 15,000 students in all; essay competition, in which nearly 700 students of 51 schools took part; drama on a few events in Swami Vivekananda's life on 5 February; pictorial exhibition on the life and message of Swami Vivekananda from 11 to 22 February; seminar on 'National Integration and Swami Vivekananda' at a college in Bhubaneswar on 16 March. **Chengalpattu:** procession, discourses, and cultural programmes at Mullikulathur village on 18 March. **Delhi:** in a function held on 4 March four NGOs were granted the Swami Vivekananda Award, instituted by Delhi ashrama, for their service to the poor and downtrodden of India. **Gadadhar Ashrama:** youth convention at Ashutosh College, Kolkata, on 3 March. **Kanchipuram:** discourses on Swami Vivekananda's life and message



in two colleges of the town on 3 and 5 March, in which altogether nearly 650 students participated; a rally and public meeting on 6 March, in which about 500 persons took part. **Limbdi:** talks on Swami Vivekananda's life and message in 8 schools during the month of March, attended by more than 3,000 students in all. **Mumbai:** interfaith dialogue on 10 March, attended by nearly 500 persons. **Palai:** district-level cultural competitions for school and college students on 21 January; youth convention on 18 February, attended by 250 students from 7 schools and 2 colleges. **Ponnampet:** interfaith meet on 10 March, attended by nearly 650 persons. **Porbandar:** programmes on Swami Vivekananda's life and message in 30 schools of Porbandar, Junagadh, and Bhuj districts, attended by a total of 5,840 students and 139 teachers. **Port Blair:** interfaith seminar on 4 March, attended by 350 delegates. **Pune:** state-level youth convention on 12 February, in which nearly 1,500 youths from all over Maharashtra took part. **Rajkot:** the ashrama has started 'Vivekananda Service Corps', through which at present 52 young men are being trained in first aid, disaster management, and other relief-related service activities as well as provided with career guidance, coaching, and counselling. **Ranchi Morabadi:** value education training programme for teachers from 27 to 29 February, in which 103 teachers took part; state-level seminar on 'Harmony of Religions' on 10 and 11 March, inaugurated by Dr Syed Ahmed, governor of Jharkhand, and attended by 924 delegates from different parts of Jharkhand. **Vadodara:** written quiz competition on Swami Vivekananda from June 2011 to February 2012, in which 54,840 students of 1,066 schools in 27 districts of Gujarat participated; essay competition from June 2011 to March 2012, in which 1,412 students of 150 colleges in Gujarat took part; district-level youth conventions in various districts of Gujarat from January to March,

in which about 13,000 youths took part; state-level youth convention at Vadodara on 24 March, in which nearly 1,100 students from all over Gujarat participated. **Viveknagar (Tripura):** all-Tripura devotees' convention at Viveknagar on 4 March, attended by about 700 delegates; seminar at Dharmanagar in North Tripura on 13 March, in which nearly 500 people took part. **Gretz (France) centre and the Maison de l'Inde (India House), Paris,** with the support of the Town Hall of the 14th District of Paris, the Embassy of India in Paris, and the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, jointly organized the unveiling ceremony of the commemorative plaque on Swami Vivekananda on 8 March at 39 Rue Gazan, 75014 Paris, where Swamiji had stayed for some time in 1900. The plaque was unveiled by Mrs Gaitri Kumar, Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy of India, in the presence of the mayor of Paris and many other dignitaries including Swami Veetamohananda, head of Gretz centre, and Dr Bikas C Sanyal, director of Maison de l'Inde.

### **New Math Centre**

**Ramakrishna Math, Gourhati,** till recently a sub-centre of Ramakrishna Math, Ichapur, has been made a full-fledged branch centre of Ramakrishna Math, Belur. Its address is Ramakrishna Math, PO Gourhati, Dist. Hooghly, West Bengal 712 613; phone no. (3211) 261209.

### **News from Branch Centres**

The school of nursing of **Ramakrishna Mission Hospital, Itanagar,** celebrated its silver jubilee on 18 February. Sri Nabam Tuki, chief minister of Arunachal Pradesh, addressed the gathering and released a commemorative volume brought out on this occasion.

The new mobile medical van of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar,** was inaugurated on 23 February.

**Ramakrishna Math, Thrissur**, launched a mobile bookstall on 23 February.

The newly built prayer hall at **Vivekananda Ashrama, Shyamla Tal**, was consecrated on 8 March, the sacred Dol Purnima Day.

**Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Aurangabad**, organized a free medical camp at Paitan—the birthplace of Sant Ekanath—on the occasion of Nath Shashthi Mela from 13 to 15 March, in which 2,372 patients were treated.

On 22 March Dr Syed Ahmed, governor of Jharkhand, visited **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Deoghar**, and addressed the staff and students of the school.

During the month of March **Ramakrishna Mission Sevashrama, Lucknow**, provided vitamin A capsules to 1,349 underprivileged children of six schools—five in Lucknow district and one in Barabanki district—and free glasses to 78 children with refractory errors.

### Achievements

A class-9 student of the school at **Ramakrishna Mission, Malliankaranai**, stood first and won the gold medal in the State Level Science Exhibition Competition organized by the Department of Science and Technology, Government of Tamil Nadu, at Dharmapuri on 25 and 26 February.

Six students of the school at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Narendrapur**—five of class 12 and one of class 11—were awarded the Kishore Vaigyanik Protsahan Yojana scholarship for the year 2011–12.


National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), an autonomous body under the University Grants Commission, has awarded 'A' grade to Vivekananda College of **Ramakrishna Mission Vidyapith, Chennai**—NAAC awards only four grades: 'A', very good; 'B', good; 'C', satisfactory; and 'D', unsatisfactory.

### Relief

**Distress Relief** • **Dinajpur** (Bangladesh) centre distributed 128 saris among poor and needy people.

**Fire Relief** • The following centres distributed various items among families whose houses had been gutted by fire. **Rajahmundry**: 1,262 saris, 1,070 lungis, 550 towels, and an equal number of chaddars, mats, and utensil sets (each set containing 3 cooking pots, 3 ladles, 1 plate, and 1 tumbler) among 550 families in Pallam village, near Amalapuram in East Godavari district. **Bhubaneswar**: 75 kg chira, 15 kg sugar, 60 packets of biscuits, 15 kg salt, 30 kg chhatu, 15 saris, and an equal number of lungis, towels, mats, and tarpaulin sheets to 15 families in Kantailo village of Bolgarh block in Khurda district.

**Flood Relief** • **Nadi** (Fiji) centre continued its extensive relief work in Nadi and Ba areas. The centre distributed 537 grocery packs (each pack containing 2 kg rice, 2 kg dal, 1 kg sugar, 500 gm salt, 200 gm spices, 2 packets of breakfast crackers, 1 packet of powdered milk, 500 ml cooking oil, 1 can of baked beans / peeled tomatoes, and other items) and 150 cartons of clothes among the affected people. The centre also supplied lunch parcels to 108 students for 4 weeks. Exercise books and stationery items were distributed among 247 needy students and medical care was provided to 938 patients. The centre has also initiated a rehabilitation programme for the local flood-affected farmers by supplying them with good seeds and, for this purpose, has undertaken the renovation and upgrading of a large nursery.

**Winter Relief** • 612 blankets were distributed to needy people through the following centres. **Hatamuniguda**, 100; **Khetri**, 58; **Pune**, 250; **Sargachhi**, 149; **Dinajpur** (Bangladesh), 55. 

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**Correction** • April 2012, p. 231: read 'On Tuesday, 26 January 1897 Vivekananda left Ceylon by boat and arrived at Pamban on the same date,' for 'On Tuesday, 26 February 1897 Vivekananda left Ceylon by boat and arrived at Pamban on the same date.'